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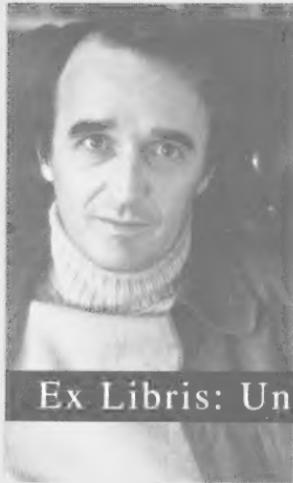


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THE JEWISHS IN MANITOBA

Arthur A. Chiel

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS



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Education is the progressive discovery of our own ignorance.
—Will Durant



THE JEWS IN MANITOBA

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 1759
BICENTENARY

OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT

וְהִי בָּעֵץ שְׁתֹול עַל
IN CANADA
פָּלָגִי מִימָּנוּ אֲשֶׁר פָּרָדוּ
יָתָן בְּעֵתָה זוּ וְעַל הַוְּלָא
בְּכָל וּכְל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה
צְלִיחָה: (תְּחִילָם א'')



AS A TRIBUTE TO THE JEWISH
SETTLERS WHO, THROUGHOUT
TWO CENTURIES, POURED ALL
THEIR HUMAN RESOURCES INTO
THE LIFESTREAM OF CANADIAN
ENDEAVOUR.

1959

"THEY FORMED A FRUITFUL AND FERTILIZING
STREAM." — RT. HON. VINCENT MASSEY



CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

THE JEWS IN MANITOBA

A Social History

BY
Arthur A. Chiel

ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE HISTORICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
OF MANITOBA

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 1961

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Foreword

THE MANITOBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, with the aid of the Government of Manitoba, has done distinguished work in making available to the public and to scholars studies of six of the ethnic groups which make up the diverse population of Manitoba. Two of these, Paul Yuzyk's *The Ukrainians in Manitoba* and E. K. Francis's *In Search of Utopia*, have been published. It is a great pleasure to welcome the third to appear—Rabbi A. A. Chiel's study of the Jewish community in Manitoba.

It is a study of great interest to both Jewish and gentile readers. It is also a valuable addition to the ethnic group studies. The main fact these studies have revealed is the degree of participation by the various groups in the life of the province. The very distinctiveness which made it an object of study has not in fact prevented each group from making a contribution to the development of the Manitoban community.

This is as true of the Jewish group as of any. None was more marked off by history, creed, and race. Yet the Jewish immigration was an integral part of the great migration to the prairies which began in the last decade of the last century. And the Jewish immigrant responded more quickly, if anything, and more gratefully than others to the freedom of opportunity and freedom of person that Manitoba afforded to its newcomers.

The result has been an outstanding contribution to provincial and national life in business, the professions, and the arts. Of the family names held in special honour in the province a high proportion is Jewish; of Manitobans who have won distinction at home and abroad the same is true. It has been a great return for an all too casual gift of the freedom and tolerance which were the young province's infinitely precious heritage.

The moving story Rabbi Chiel has told with scholarship, style, and humour. The Jewish community and the people of Manitoba are indebted to him. And a wider audience may well share the interest and information this charming book affords.

W. L. MORTON

*University of Manitoba
September, 1959*

Preface

SOON AFTER MY ARRIVAL in Winnipeg, in 1949, when I assumed the directorship of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, I was taken with the idea of writing a history of the Jewish community in Manitoba. Impressed by the colour and vitality of Jewish life in this Canadian prairie province I found my curiosity stirred with respect to the sources of its dynamism. In 1950, when I began to lecture in Jewish history in the newly established Department of Judaic Studies at the University of Manitoba, the idea of writing such a history was given further impetus from two quarters.

My students at the university recurringly expressed an interest in the background of their *own* community. The question of how local Jewish experience fitted into the larger historical panorama intrigued them. I was obliged to seek the answers. This then was the stimulus from one quarter.

The second stimulus came from two fellow faculty members: Professor William L. Morton, Chairman of the Department of History, and Professor Paul Yuzyk of the Departments of History and Slavic Studies. Professor Morton who was then at work on his *Manitoba: A History* expressed unhappiness over the paucity of material concerning the various ethnic and religious groups in the province. He indicated to me that a real service could be performed by researchers among these groups. Moreover, he acquainted me with the fact that the Manitoba Historical Society was interested in sponsoring a series of ethnic and religious studies. Professor Paul Yuzyk, who had been the first Research Fellow of the Society and who by then was putting the final touches on his *The Ukrainians in Manitoba* asked me to peruse his manuscript. I confess that my reading of that pioneer study excited my admiration and ambition to do the same for the Manitoba Jewish community.

In 1952, then, Professors Morton and Yuzyk proposed me for a Research Fellowship and I was soon informed by the then President of the Manitoba Historical Society, Dr. Ross Mitchell, that a grant would be forthcoming. Having done some spade work during the two years prior to 1952, I now proceeded determinedly with my research effort.

I examined systematically the Manitoba press beginning with the *Nor'Wester*, the province's earliest newspaper. I read extensively in Manitoba's early histories. I examined carefully Winnipeg's Yiddish

and Anglo-Jewish newspapers. I searched the Provincial Archives and I interviewed all of the Jewish pioneers who were still in our midst during that time. Gradually the history of Manitoba Jewry emerged for me in mind and on paper.

In July, 1957, on the very day that I took permanent leave of Winnipeg, I completed the final paragraphs of *The Jews in Manitoba*. This history is my small gift in return for the friendship and warmth accorded to me during my eight years' sojourn in hospitable environs.

ARTHUR A. CHIEL, *Rabbi*

Tuckahoe, New York

Hanukah, 1960

Acknowledgments

MY SINCEREST APPRECIATION and thanks are expressed to all who have shared with me advice and information in the preparation of this volume. For continuous and unstinting assistance for sundry materials I am grateful to the late Dr. J. Leslie Johnston, the Provincial Librarian of Manitoba; to his successor, Miss Marjorie G. Morley, to Hartwell W. Bowsfield, Provincial Archivist, to Miss Clementine Combaz and Miss Joan Dawson, both of them staff members of the Provincial Library, to Mr. William Douglas, and to Mr. Louis Rosenberg, Research Director of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

For criticism and suggestions at various stages in the preparation of the manuscript I am indebted to Dr. Moshe Davis, Director of the Institute of Contemporary Affairs at the Hebrew University, to Professor Abraham Halkin of the Jewish Theological Seminary, to Rabbi Isidore S. Meyer, the Librarian-Editor of the American Jewish Historical Society, to Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, Director of the American-Jewish Archives, Dr. David de Sola Pool, Professor Sol Sinclair, Mr. Melvin Fenson, and to Miss Frances G. Halpenny, Editor, University of Toronto Press.

The publication of this volume was made possible by a group of generous friends whose names are herewith offered with deep gratitude: Nathan Arkin, E. J. Aronovitch, A. Akman, Jr., Abe Averbach, Julius Berkowitz, Frank Billinkoff, Alex Cham, Sam Cohen, Samuel Drache, Q.C., Joseph Dreman, Joseph Erlichman, Joseph Gladstone, Bert Glesby, J. J. Glesby, William Goldberg, Sol Kanee, William S. Katz, Charles Kroft, David Levin, Q.C., Sylvan Leipsic, Nathan Lockshin, Max Margolis, Frank Marantz, Archie R. Micay, Q.C., Israel Moser, Samuel Moser, Sid Morantz, Morris Neaman, Norman Odwak, Dr. Maurice Pierce, Morris Schwartz, Ben Shuckett, Frank Simkin, Saul Simkin, Levy Sommers, Malech Spivak, Sidney Spivak, David Stall, Nathan Stall, Charles O. Swartz, and Abe Steinberg. Thanks are also due to the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Hebrew Fraternal Lodge.

As in all of my endeavours my wife, Kinneret, has been my helpmate in this project, too. I acknowledge happily and appreciatively her guidance and suggestions which proved eminently good at all times.

A.A.C.

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THE JEWS IN MANITOBA

Chapter One

THE LAND OF PROMISE

IT COULD BE SAID that the history of Manitoba began in 1610 when Henry Hudson, motivated by the dream of a northwest passage, sailed into the Bay which was to carry his name. For the next sixty years the Bay became open territory, free to all—English from over the sea, French from Quebec. In the late 1660's Sir George Carteret was on his way back to England *via* Boston, from surveying the large land grant of New Jersey which was given to him by Charles II, when he met two Quebec explorer-fur traders who were disgruntled by the unfair treatment accorded them by their own French-Canadian authorities. Having heard their reports of the great fur potential in the Hudson Bay region where they had both traded successfully, Carteret decided to take with him the two French Canadians, Radisson and Groseilliers, so that they might tell their exciting story at the English court.

Prince Rupert, an influential court figure and cousin to Charles II, was intrigued by the revelations of Radisson and Groseilliers and proceeded to organize for them an expedition of two ships to Hudson Bay in 1668. One ship, the *Nonsuch*, succeeded in reaching its goal and returned in 1669 with a cargo that brought delight to Prince Rupert and his associates. Acting quickly, the enterprising Rupert secured a charter from Charles II in May, 1670, for a vast territory to be known henceforth as Rupert's Land. The exclusive proprietors of this region, out of which at least half a dozen European states might be carved, were to be the "Gentlemen Adventurers of England trading in Hudson's Bay."

Understandably, the news of the charter represented a severe blow to France. From Quebec a French Mission sailed to stake its claim to Hudson Bay and the environs. The years to follow were years of struggle between France and England over the coveted prize with sporadic, bitter encounters at the trading posts on Hudson Bay. But it was European events that settled the destiny of Hudson Bay and Rupert's Land. Marlborough's victory in Austria, in 1704, and other defeats imposed by the British upon France brought peace finally in

the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. By this pact, France ceded to Britain all of Rupert's Land.

II

During the second century (1714–1812) of Manitoba's history the fur trade was prosecuted with unbounded vigour but it brought few permanent settlers to the country; the land remained unpeopled and most of its resources undeveloped. The few white men who came were hardly more than nomads, travelling back and forth between a score of widely scattered fur-trading posts by means of canoe, cart, and pony. Government was in its most primitive form, the Hudson's Bay Company ruling by remote control from its forts in the north on the Bay.

The French Canadians were determined to push their way to the Pacific Ocean by establishing a series of trading posts to the northwest of Lake Superior. Outstanding among the French explorer-traders in this effort was Sieur de La Verendrye who, during a period of twelve years (1731–43), opened for the white man many heretofore unknown regions. French traders who followed La Verendrye extended the inland trade to the Saskatchewan River; with good commercial instinct they chose for their posts the sites of modern Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, and the Pas. Thanks to the competition of these French traders the Hudson's Bay Company began finally, in 1754, to send its traders inland to deal with Indians who were being diverted to the French traders.

But a greater threat to the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly developed after the British conquest of Quebec in 1759. When the cession of Quebec to Britain was completed by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, British merchants quickly availed themselves of the business opportunities which arose in the new colony. Many of them settled in Montreal, and from among these Montrealers came the keen competitors who were to challenge the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly far more persistently than the French traders had ever dared. These traders were to be labelled the Pedlars by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1783 the Montreal Pedlars formally organized themselves into the North West Company, engaging as employees the adventurous French voyageurs who had previously worked for French fur-trade companies. These were excellent staff who added immeasurably to the success of the North West Company. Competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Montrealers grew keen. Nor was it confined to the interior of the country west of Michilimackinac where each established trading posts. The North West Company made so bold as to outfit a

vessel, the *Beaver*, to secure as much of the trade in Hudson Bay as possible, thus challenging the Hudson's Bay Company in home territory! The competition for the fur trade between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North Westers of Montreal was continuous and bitter for half a century. At last in 1821 the rival companies merged in the fur trade under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

It was during the second century of the West's history, during the fur trade period, that an English Jew arrived and established himself in the region. He was Ferdinand Jacobs, who had been engaged in London, England, in April, 1732, to serve as an apprentice in the fur trade of the Hudson's Bay Company. In the summer of 1732 Jacobs arrived at Prince of Wales Fort on Churchill River, where he served under the erstwhile governor, Richard Norton. A devoted servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, Ferdinand Jacobs gradually moved up in the Company's hierarchy, eventually attaining the post of Chief Factor, first at Prince of Wales Fort, later at York Fort. Forty-three years after his entry into the Company's employ, in 1775, Jacobs retired. He spent the remaining years of his life in London, England, where he died in May, 1785.

It was during Ferdinand Jacobs's career that the Hudson's Bay Territory was invaded by the Montreal Pedlars. They were Scots, Englishmen, and a few Jews. Like the Scots of Montreal, the Jewish traders, numbering initially five, banded together in partnership. They apportioned among themselves the western fur region and were financed in their enterprise by Jewish entrepreneurs in New York and London. To Ezekiel Solomons fell the responsibility for the territory to the northwest of Michilimackinac, squarely within Hudson's Bay country. Like the other Montreal Pedlars, Solomons was involved in the hot struggle and bloody intrigue that ensued between the mighty Company and the independent traders who were later knitted into the North West Company of Montreal. In addition to Solomons, Jewish fur traders included Chapman Abrahams, Gerson Levy, Benjamin Lyon, and Levy Solomons. Though not large in numbers, these Jewish traders helped to extend the East's influence in the fur trade of the West.

The parallel pattern of immigration followed by Scots and Jews is worth noting. In the sixteenth century a goodly number of Scots made their way into eastern Europe, into Poland and Russia, where Jews had preceded them by several centuries and where both peoples served a similar economic role as middlemen. Because in these countries the native population belonged either to the nobility or to the peasantry,

there was need for an intermediary mercantile group. Thus did Scots and Jews demonstrate their abilities to the advantage of their adopted lands, first in eastern Europe, later in Canada.

III

A new page in the history of the West was turned with the rise of the Red River settlement when agricultural development began. The West was to be no longer merely a hunting ground. Its destiny was henceforth to be determined less and less by the fur traders, increasingly by the farmers.

In 1804, the Earl of Selkirk, a high-minded and aggressive Scots nobleman, turned his attention to the resettlement of impoverished Scottish Highlanders, who had been displaced from their farms in their native Scotland. Using his personal wealth and influence he brought over emigrants first to Prince Edward Island and later to Ontario. But in 1810 his attention became fixed upon the West where he believed that ultimately some thirty million people could be supported by its fertile soil. Buying heavily, with his brother-in-law, into the Hudson's Bay Company Lord Selkirk was able to acquire an area encompassing approximately 116,000 square miles, an area almost equivalent to Great Britain and Ireland. The region formed a quadrilateral, including parts of modern-day Manitoba, Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and Minnesota. With the settlement of the Red River area, Lord Selkirk hoped to achieve two goals: to make it possible for the Hudson's Bay Company, in which he was now a substantial stockholder, to invade the rich fur country presently being exploited largely by the North West Company and to establish an agricultural settlement which could furnish provisions for the sundry posts which would arise across the West.

In August, 1812, a small band of Lord Selkirk's settlers arrived at Fort Douglas, present-day Winnipeg, and with their leader, Miles Macdonell, took formal possession of the Selkirk grant, Assiniboia, the heart of which would be the Red River settlement. At last the lone land would begin to be peopled; and before a century passed Lord Selkirk's dream of a settled prairie would begin to be fulfilled. In addition to settlers who would follow the first Selkirk group, the Red River settlement attracted Orkneymen, who were servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, French-Canadian families from Quebec, and the half-breed Métis. Churches and schools were established and the

rudiments of civilization were introduced into the midst of a vast frontier country.

From the time the Red River settlement was established until the death of Lord Selkirk in 1820, it was under his personal control. In 1823, the executors of Selkirk's estate, uninterested in his great plans for the settlement, transferred its government to the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1835 the Company made the transfer complete by repurchasing Assiniboia from Selkirk's heirs. While on the whole the Company's rule insured law and order there was internal unrest among the populace. To the south of the Red River settlement the frontier of the United States was being steadily pushed forward; the railway was making its way across the land in the 1840's; and settlers moved steadily into the western United States.

The freedom of United States settlers contrasted with the monopoly and control of the Hudson's Bay Company over Red River settlement residents and the hostility of the Métis and Scottish settlers to the Company grew steadily. Collecting their furs in secret these people stealthily made their way to the market south of the border. At long last the tension between Company and settlers was resolved in 1859 when the British House of Commons officially terminated the Company's monopoly. The federation of Canada in 1867 made provision for a possible union of the west with the Dominion of Canada, which union became fact in May, 1870. Unfortunately, this union was not carried through with the best of diplomacy. No attempt was made to assure the Métis that their rights as citizens and landholders would be guaranteed. Canadian surveyors brusquely went about their business on behalf of the government stirring the Métis to anger and suspicion which broke out in the uprising of 1869 led by Louis Riel. It was necessary for the Canadian government to send troops from Ontario under Colonel Garnet Wolseley to quell the uprising. The colony of Red River now became Manitoba, Canada's fifth province, a province with an orderly government, a province ready to receive large numbers of settlers from eastern Canada, from the United States, and from across the Atlantic.

IV

The Riel uprising of 1869 had focused attention on Manitoba. Many of the volunteers in the Ontario militia sent to quell the revolt of the Métis, who had struggled with the soil of Ontario's less productive regions, decided to take up permanent settlement in Manitoba.

They returned to Ontario with good reports concerning the land and hundreds of additional settlers began to arrive in Manitoba in 1871. They came by the newly opened Dawson Route, leading from Lake of the Woods to St. Boniface, or by rail to Minnesota and from there down the Red River in flatboats and steamers. These Ontario emigrants continued to arrive in Manitoba until 1874.

The French community of Manitoba found its earlier ranks augmented by French settlers from Massachusetts in 1875, together with some from Quebec. Until 1875, then, there was a balance in Manitoba between the Protestant and French Catholic communities, a fact that was recognized in the two provisions of the Manitoba Act of 1870 which provided for Protestant and Roman Catholic schools and the use of English and French in the legislature of the province.

Meanwhile events in far-off Russia, which would on several occasions in Manitoba's history effect a change in the character of its population, had their first repercussions in the early 1870's. The Mennonites who had lived by their pacifist and pietistic tenets in Russia since 1786, when Catherine the Great had allowed them to come from Prussia to settle in her domain, were suddenly deprived of their particular privileges. The Russian government gave them the choice: to conform with Russian citizenship laws in every way, including military service, or to leave the country within ten years. Large numbers of Mennonites chose exodus and among the areas of resettlement sought out for them was Manitoba where the first Mennonites arrived in 1874. The Canadian government assured them exemption from military service, and their religious freedom including their own church schools. The reserve set aside for the Mennonites by the government was a district about half way between Winnipeg and the United States-Canada boundary. Between 1874 and 1879 the Mennonite population grew to 7,383.

Another group drawn to Manitoba after 1874 was the Icelanders. These hardy people were driven from their northern homeland by the volcanic eruption of Mount Hecla in 1873 which in its natural violence buried large areas of pasture under lava and ashes. Large numbers of Icelanders were displaced and they looked to new land for settlement, preferably land that would approximate the conditions in their mother country. They wanted a region where their herds could be pastured and where they could simultaneously carry on their fishing. In 1875 a vanguard of Icelanders arrived and took up settlement on Lake Winnipeg, naming their colony "Gimli" or "Paradise."

With the coming of Icelanders and Mennonites the earlier dual ethnic character, between Protestant (Scottish-English-Canadian) and French Catholic was ended. Manitoba was fast becoming in the 1879's and, increasingly thereafter, a multi-ethnic province richly blessed with peoples of varying cultures and faiths. Such a conglomerate of groups would lead to a colourful community based on unity in diversity.

V

Until 1870 there had been a slow evolutionary change taking place in east European society. After 1870 that change became accelerated. The industrial and agricultural revolutions of west Europe were beginning to take hold in the east. The castes of earlier centuries, consisting of aristocrats and peasants, of priests, of guilds each maintaining respectful distance from the other, were being rapidly broken down. The Jews, who had had their particular position within this centuries-old pattern, found the revolutionary changes after the 1870's affecting them more and more severely. The growth of large-scale agriculture which drove the peasantry from their farms also eliminated the role of the Jews as middlemen between landholders and farmers. Furthermore the growth of manufacturing did away with the independent Jewish artisans. The economic revolution of Europe displaced ever larger numbers of young Jewish men and they were compelled to turn their eyes westward.

The earliest of such Jewish immigrants came to Manitoba in the 1870's. Some of them were from west Europe, others from east Europe. They came individually and they came in small numbers. Later tragic events—the pogroms of Russia and Rumania—would bring the larger mass movements of Jews into Manitoba in 1882, 1892, 1903, and 1906. Their story, as it unfolded during several generations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is herein recorded.

Chapter Two

PIONEER SETTLERS

IN JUNE, 1859, a small, flat-bottomed steamboat, the *Anson Northrup*, plied its way from Breckenridge, Minnesota, up the Red River to Winnipeg thus establishing one more avenue of connection between the heart of the North American continent and the outside world. Until 1859 the only inland water route into Hudson's Bay territory led from the North Atlantic into Hudson Bay, with York Factory as the port of entry. But the northern shipping route was inadequate, the season of open water during the summer short, and the complicated trek down to the Red River settlement long. The time was ripe for the opening of a second trade route from south of the border, from Chicago and St. Paul. This new link opened further the gates to the Red River settlement and the Canadian northwest for ambitious American traders and allowed ever growing numbers of Red River Valley residents to go down to St. Paul to sell furs directly to the buyers of that city.

Even before the Red River boat route was opened in 1859 the more tedious overland trail had been crossed regularly by Red River oxcart trains, often numbering as many as five or six hundred carts in a single caravan. Starting out from Winnipeg in early April the oxcarts arrived at St. Paul with their precious fur cargoes in June of each year. Among the St. Paul fur traders who bought up the furs brought in by the half-breeds was Joseph Ullman, a pioneer Jewish settler in St. Paul. Ullman's wife, a cultured lady, kept an excellent diary in which she has described the colourful scene of an oxcart train's arrival from Winnipeg in 1857:

One day in the Spring, I walked up to the level track that lay on St. Anthony's Hill and was struck by the peculiar sight that I saw. Several hundred men of dark complexions, with long black hair and black eyes; a collection of carts made entirely from wood and scraggy Indian ponies or long-horned oxen had possession of the hill. They were "Half Breeds," as we called them, who had come from the "Red River country" and beyond to St. Paul to sell their furs. The men with their tall straight figures clothed in furs or rough cloth, were lounging around their rude two-wheeled carts, in the construction of which no iron not even a nail had been used, and displaying the furs that they had brought. They had

started as soon as the melting snow and ice would permit and with their crude carts and heavy burdens had consumed three or four months on the way. After they made the purchase of such necessities as they wished to take back with them, they silently disappeared. For several years they continued to make these business pilgrimages and encamped upon St. Anthony Hill; but later, when the country was opened up to settlement and the fur dealers sent their agents there to buy furs, this peculiar feature of St. Paul life became only a reminiscence.

These people, although considered by us as very primitive and almost uncivilized, were very different from the neighbouring Indian tribes, representations of which we saw every day upon the streets. The men were tall and erect; few had adopted the clothes of the white man but wrapped themselves in government blankets. The squaws were in striking contrast; they were small and almost childlike. . . . Their papooses they carried crosswise on their backs, the little one's stolid face peeping over the mother's left shoulder.¹

The oxcart trains faded from the St. Paul scene supplanted first by the steamboats and subsequently by the railroads. Representatives of fur establishments in the United States came directly to the Canadian sources of supply to buy up large quantities of pelts. Among the early comers to Winnipeg and points within the North-West Territory was Joseph Ullman who together with a number of other Jewish merchants had founded the Jewish community in St. Paul. Ullman, proprietor of a general store, had dealt with Red River fur traders when first they came down to St. Paul, exchanging staples such as coffee, tea, sugar, and liquor for mink, sable, and other furs. Eventually Ullman and other buyers came to Manitoba or sent their agents to purchase from traders and trappers in the fur country. Joseph Ullman, whose firm grew rapidly, placed his representatives in Winnipeg and as far northwest as Edmonton. Because of these excellent contacts the Ullman firm developed into an international fur establishment with branches in Chicago, New York, Paris, London, Leipzig, and Shanghai.

Other Jewish fur dealers who sent agents to Manitoba from St. Paul were Auerbach, Finch, and Scheffer² and an independent trader who came on his own, C. J. Kovitz. As reported in the *Nor'Wester*, Kovitz came to Winnipeg in the spring of 1860 "to buy furs from the hunters on their return from the plains." He left Winnipeg in June, 1860, with fifty bales of buffalo robes, three hundred prime martens,

¹American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. Photostatic copy of Mrs. Joseph Ullman's diary.

²New Nation (Winnipeg), June 14, 1860. An advertisement for furs gave their address as 116-118 Third Street, St. Paul.

and seven hundred fine minks. According to the newspaper Kovitz professed "to be well pleased and wishes it to be known that he intends returning in 1861 prepared with cash to do a much larger business." Kovitz kept his word, too, and advertised in the *Nor'Wester* of February 1, 1861. No doubt C. J. Kovitz's satisfaction with his dealings in Winnipeg prompted him to spread word of his success among his business acquaintances in St. Paul. Jewish fur dealers were thereafter no uncommon sight in Winnipeg, particularly in the spring of each year.

A careful scrutiny of local newspapers has revealed the comings and goings of people whose names suggest Jewish origins. They are listed in the chronological order of their appearance:

June, 1874, N. D. Goldsmith
 August, 1874, Abraham Gold
 August, 1874, S. Kahn, United States Army Sergeant
 September, 1874, R. Stein
 May, 1876, Joseph Belner
 June, 1876, Rothschild
 April, 1877, Julius Austrian
 April, 1877, William Einstein
 June, 1877, M. Hurvich and S. Soloman
 July, 1877, Z. Auerbach
 August, 1877, Jacob Berger
 September, 1877, Mrs. L. Levy

Concerning Sergeant Kahn the news report reveals that he was on furlough from the United States Army and that he spent a brief holiday in Winnipeg. Kahn inserted a card of thanks in a Winnipeg newspaper, to his host: "I hereby respectfully tender my thanks to Jos. Milligan, Esq., for his hospitality and kindness towards me."³ Julius Austrian, a pioneer Jewish resident of St. Paul, was a peripatetic trader in the Great Lakes region for many years. His advertisement in the Winnipeg newspaper reads:

JULIUS AUSTRIAN

81 Jackson Street, St. Paul, Minnesota offers to furnish any kind of provision or grain on short notice, at the lowest market price. Will give quotations on goods delivered at Duluth. Having connections with a line of steamers running between Chicago, Milwaukee and Duluth, I can offer goods at bottom figures and solicit orders from my Canadian neighbors.⁴

³*Manitoba Free Press*, August 29, 1874.

⁴*Ibid.*, April 3, 1877.

Austrian made annual visits to Winnipeg for several years after 1877, his name appearing on arrival lists at frequent intervals. Z. Auerbach, who arrived on the *Manitoba* in July, 1877, came from Montreal, representing an eastern dry goods firm. Several years later M. K. Auerbach, also from Montreal, became a permanent resident and established himself as a merchant in St. Boniface.

The permanent Jewish community in Manitoba had its beginnings in 1877. Jewish visitors had come and gone returning to the larger Jewish communities in Montreal, St. Paul, Chicago, and New York and it is reasonable to suppose that they told stories of their personal experiences in Manitoba. Those who had succeeded here certainly would have reason to be particularly optimistic about the economic potentialities of this region. Young Jewish men who had uprooted themselves from their European birthplaces were not afraid to keep moving further into frontier regions. Among these youthful arrivals were some who were not at all pleased with the conditions which they found in the large cities. There, life was complex and the struggle for a livelihood cruel and difficult. Many must have asked themselves why they should not venture into the newly opened regions which held promise of a better future. Among the lands that beckoned was Manitoba and there Jewish pioneers began to arrive in 1877.

In the Winnipeg section of the *Manitoba Directory* of 1877-8, the following terse item of information is listed, "Coblentz, Edmond, clerk, boards at Commercial Hotel, Post Office Street."⁵ Edmond Coblentz was the first member of his family to arrive in Manitoba and the first Jew to settle here permanently. The eldest of three brothers, he was followed into Manitoba in 1878 by Aachel Benvoir and Adolphe Coblentz. Originally from Alsace-Lorraine, they had immigrated to the United States some time in the early 1860's. Edmond and Aachel first came with their wives to Philadelphia while Adolphe who had married Sarah Weixelbaum of Philadelphia settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. En route to the United States the Coblentz brothers had resided for a time in Paris and there Adolphe had served in the French army. Young and ambitious, the Coblentz brothers had heard that Canada's inland frontier held promise for enterprising men. They may have been attracted by the French-speaking population of this region. Quite possibly, too, through contact with Mennonites in the Pennsylvania countryside they learned of new Mennonite settlements in Manitoba. Edmond blazed the way for the family in 1877; his brothers

⁵*Manitoba Directory*, 1877-8, p. 43.

followed in 1878.⁶ On his arrival in Winnipeg, Edmond Coblenz clerked in Winnipeg for a time during 1877-8, then became a merchant in St. Anne des Chesne.

In a short while he became a respected member of the French town and began to interest himself in local politics. In June, 1879, Edmond Coblenz took up the cudgels for a local candidate to the Manitoba Legislature who had been accused of fraudulent vote-getting, a not uncommon charge in those early days. In the *Free Press* there appeared an open letter addressed to the candidate in question, Charles Nolin:

Dear Sir—I am instructed by a large number of your supporters in the parish of St. Anne, both English speaking and French, to intimate their wishes that you at once take measures to appeal against the judgement rendered against you in the contested election case, between Jimby, Curtaz and you, as they consider it is in every way unfair and unjust to you and them.

Yours truly,
E. COBLENTZ⁷

Nolin, who sent Coblenz's letter together with his own covering note to the *Free Press* indicated that he would accede to Coblenz's request, "appealing against the judgement" handed down in the Manitoba court by Justice Betournay. Edmond Coblenz was well chosen as St. Anne's spokesman because he could write on behalf of both the French and the English residents of the town.

The second of the Coblenz brothers, Aachel Benvoir, worked as a salesman for Stobart, Eden and Company and later for Whitla's, both large Winnipeg wholesale establishments. He was well known in the city and held in good repute by Winnipeggers. In humorous vein, the *Free Press* came to A. B. Coblenz's defence when the *Times*, a rival Winnipeg newspaper, wrote one day: "A. B. Coblenz is now hanging up his clothes to dry at Whitla's."⁸ To which the *Free Press* retorted: "We have it on the most reliable authority that Mr. Coblenz is not hanging up his clothes to dry anywhere. His washerwoman attends to that. Neither is Whitla's a clothes drying establishment, that Mr. Coblenz should hang his clothes up there. Our contemporary should not be so reckless in its assertions."⁹ He was a generous man, too, for

⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, April 30, 1878: "A. Coblenz, and wife and 48 deck passengers arrives last night on 'The International'."

⁷*Ibid.*, June 2, 1879.

⁸*Winnipeg Daily Times*, April 18, 1881.

⁹*Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1881.

his name is to be found on contributors' lists for various causes, including the Irish Relief Fund and the Winnipeg Library.

The third brother, Adolphe Coblenz, resided in Winnipeg during 1878 and 1879 and was employed at Chevrier's Blue Store. He frequently travelled in the countryside for business, dealing also with the Indians. The first Jewish child born in Manitoba was William, the son of Adolphe Coblenz and his wife. His birth date was January 28, 1879. On this occasion a *mohel* was brought from Chicago to circumcise the child according to Jewish ritual.

With the money saved from his modest earnings as a clerk and salesman Adolphe Coblenz built the Golden Hotel, a small hostelry in West Lynne. In a short while he became a leading citizen in West Lynne, Emerson, and the surrounding area. Because he was fluent in both French and German, Adolphe Coblenz became the friend of both these national groupings in his region. He had close contact with the Mennonites in the border region of southern Manitoba, whose mother tongue was German, and at the same time he had dealings with the French settlers along the Red River to the north of West Lynne. His hotel, the largest in that vicinity, was a popular inn and gathering place for all. In a sense, Adolphe Coblenz was the European Jewish innkeeper of the past transposed to the Canadian setting and, like his European counterpart, Coblenz had his fingers in many a communal pie. It is not surprising therefore to find that when a local conflict developed at the Mennonite colony of Dufferin County in April, 1879, Coblenz became involved.

Isaac Miller, president of the Mennonite colony, inserted a public notice in the *Emerson News*: "I hereby give public notice to all whom it may concern, that in future no credit is to be given to any of the Mennonites within the above reserve without a written order from myself." The *Emerson News*¹⁰ took Isaac Miller to task, saying that the public notice which appeared within its columns "savored of intolerable despotism." Immediately thereafter in another local paper, the *Emerson International*,¹¹ Adolphe Coblenz supported Miller, offering the following explanation for Miller's arbitrary stand:

The Mennonites are debtors to the Government in the total sum of \$90,000, which must be paid within the next five years. Kaiser Miller, as President of the Colony, is a surety that this money will be forthcoming. In his position as surety he has taken security upon all the effects of the Mennonites to provide against failure in payment. The goods of these people being, therefore, covered by the incumbrance, it would be unfair

¹⁰*Emerson News*, April, 1880.

¹¹*Emerson International*, April, 1880.

to the public that merchants and others should credit them under a mistaken belief that they are able to pay, or at least, if they did not pay, they can be compelled by process of law to do so.

The *Manitoba Free Press*¹² made its own inquiry into the matter and adjudged Isaac Miller's action as improper. He was not the elected president of the Dufferin Mennonite colonists. The paper maintained, rather, that he was the paid agent of only a portion of the group and had no more responsibility for the Mennonite debt to the Dominion government than any other member of the community; nor was he a loan surety therefore. In the paper's opinion, Mr. Coblenz's statement and his motive for releasing it were subject to serious question.

From the reports of this debate it becomes obvious that Adolphe Coblenz had developed a close relationship with the Mennonites. In a sense he paved the way for a considerable number of Jews who came after him and also enjoyed excellent relations with this pacifist religious group. Adolphe Coblenz's interests were not limited to the German-speaking populace. He was on equally good terms with the French populace and in May, 1880, when Hon. Maxime Goulet, Minister of Agriculture in the Manitoba Cabinet, passed through on government business, it was Adolphe Coblenz who accompanied him on a tour of the Touchwood Hills area of southern Manitoba.¹³

The Coblenz brothers of Alsace-Lorraine were the earliest permanent Jewish settlers in Manitoba and settled at three strategic points in the province; Aachel Benvoir in Winnipeg proper was a respected employee of Whitla's, a large commercial establishment; Edmond became a merchant in St. Anne des Chesne; and Adolphe kept the Golden Hotel at West Lynne. Each sank roots in his own community and rapidly integrated into the varied ethnic setting of his new home.

II

A much caricatured figure, whose role in the economy of the land has not been properly evaluated, was the humble Jewish pedlar of the past. The butt of jokes and the victim of pranks, the pedlar rendered an important service to the populace of underdeveloped regions. He brought his many wares directly to the village or to the farmhouse frequently obviating the need for a long trek to a larger merchandising centre. There were those who resorted to the calling for a short period of time until they had saved a few dollars to establish a permanent shop in some town. On the other hand there were pedlars who plied

¹²*Manitoba Free Press*, April 19, 1880.

¹³*Ibid.*, May 17, 1880.

their trade for many years, building good reputations among a steady clientele into whose homes they were received as welcome visitors. They regaled their customers with views from the outside world, and advice concerning the most recent ladies' fashions, and they discussed the political or religious issues of the day. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in his autobiographical work, *Reminiscences*, offers a detailed portrayal of the Jewish pedlar's evolution:

Our people in this country, may be divided into the following classes. (1) The basket-peddler—he is as yet altogether dumb and homeless; (2) The trunk carrier, who stammers some little English and hopes for better times; (3) The pack-carrier, who carries from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds upon his back, and indulges the thought that he will become a business man some day. In addition to these, there is the aristocracy, which may be divided into three classes: (1) The Wagon baron, who peddles through the country with a one or two horse team; (2) The Jewelry-count who carries a stock of watches and jewelry in a small trunk, and is considered a rich man even now; (3) The store prince, who has a shop and sells goods in it. At first one is the slave of the basket or the pack; then the lackey of the horse, in order to become finally the servant of the shop.¹⁴

The first Jewish pedlar to settle permanently in Manitoba was Reuben Goldstein, who came to the province in 1877.¹⁵ In November of 1878 his departure by stage-coach on peddling jaunts was noted several times.¹⁶ To use Rabbi Wise's classification, Reuben Goldstein was "a jewelry-count," who came from Russia to London, England, where he resided long enough to acquire a knowledge of English and then emigrated to Canada. Goldstein was an enterprising young man, who sold jewellery mainly to railroad workers along the track-laying line. He fared rather well except for the several instances when ruffians made sport of his Jewish origin. Thus on the morning of March 6, 1879, Reuben Goldstein brought charges in the Winnipeg Police Court against a railroader who had assaulted him at Brouse's Hotel. According to the report the affair grew out of a dispute about watches, during which the railroader accused Goldstein "of being a party to a transaction which took place some 1800 years ago." Goldstein, unabashed, retorted in sharp fashion whereupon the unnamed railroader punched him on the head. Apparently remorseful, the rail-

¹⁴Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences*. Translated by David Phillipson (Cincinnati, L. Wise & Co., 1901).

¹⁵The year of 1877 was offered as the year of Reuben Goldstein's settling, by his family. From court proceedings in which Goldstein was involved we learn that he left England for this country, perhaps for Eastern Canada, in 1868.

¹⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, November 6, 28, 1878.

roader offered to compensate Goldstein five dollars for the damage done him. However, Reuben Goldstein persisted in pressing charges but the magistrate dismissed the case and charged the costs to Goldstein.¹⁷

It was Reuben Goldstein who introduced into Manitoba the instalment purchasing plan which at a later period became an integral part of this land's economy. Some time after he had introduced the "buy-on-trial" method, an interesting case evolved in the Manitoba Court between Goldstein and a customer named Robinson. Three months before the trial, in September, 1879, Goldstein had persuaded Robinson to take on trial a gold watch upon which he set a value of one hundred and seventy-five dollars. Robinson carried the watch for a period of time but because it failed to keep satisfactory time, he took it to a jeweller to be regulated. While at the jeweller's he sought an evaluation of the watch and was dismayed to learn that its value was only fifty dollars. According to Robinson, in his testimony before Chief Justice Wood, he made several attempts to return the watch but because Goldstein was frequently away from home he was unable to contact him. In the interim Robinson received a letter from Goldstein's solicitors, Walker, Archibald and Howell, threatening a writ for the recovery of the watch and only then did Robinson return it. The evidence given at the trial was exceedingly conflicting and several jewellers were called in to evaluate the watch. Several valuations were offered. The Chief Justice ruled that since no sale was concluded Goldstein could not collect.¹⁸

After a time Reuben Goldstein decided to leave peddling, and in 1881-2 he established himself as a hotel-keeper at St. François Xavier and dabbled in land speculation, as did many Manitobans of that era.¹⁹ While running the hotel he also experimented with farming at Headingly, becoming the first Jewish farmer in this province.²⁰ Until 1885 Goldstein was a hotelkeeper-farmer-rancher in Manitoba. But again he became restless; the homesteader in him was superseded by the pioneering spirit of the one-time pedlar and he migrated with his family to Juneau, Alaska, where he remained until his death.²¹

¹⁷*Ibid.*, March 6, 1879.

¹⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, September 30, 1879.

¹⁹Queen's Bench of Manitoba, case record 447, *Reuben Goldstein v. John Morgan*.

²⁰Queen's Bench of Manitoba, case record 642, *Reuben Goldstein v. Zacharias Pickworth and Stuart McDonald*.

²¹Reuben Goldstein's son, Charles, was in later years mayor of Juneau and was among the last people to see Will Rogers and Wiley Post before they set off on their ill-fated flight. Reuben Goldstein's descendants today reside in Alaska, California, and Illinois.

Moses Freedman was another early Jewish pedlar whose short stay in Winnipeg was full of pathetic mishaps. Because of a series of altercations he was haled into court frequently and these episodes were well publicized in the press. Let it be noted that the newspaper style of the Winnipeg frontier era (the sixties, seventies, and eighties) was expansive and extravagant, permitting itself to dramatize its reporting and to editorialize in its news columns. Its day-to-day news coverage was full of rich detail, linguistic licence, humour, and ridicule. As the city grew into a larger metropolis and the newspaper developed a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan character, the style of reporting would become more objective and sober, but for that period Moses Freedman was perfect grist for the reporter's mill. In May, 1879, we are introduced to Freedman through a column in the *Free Press*:

Moses Freedman's little boy made fun and threw stones at a poor old apple peddler of the Hebrew persuasion, and the poor old apple peddler administered a good spanking to Moses' little boy. Moses then pulled the poor old apple peddler to the provincial police court this morning for assaulting his little boy, but the case was dismissed. Then Moses girded up his loins and went out on the street, and smote the poor old peddler on his potato trap which grieved him sorely. He told his woes to Chief Power who ran both the refractory Hebrews into the cooler. They were subsequently brought up before Judge Betournay, who, between the pathetic pleadings of Moses and the wailing lamentations of the poor old peddler was nearly driven distracted, while an irreverent audience laughed and tittered at the "sad tale of woe." His Lordship discussed the case, throwing in a warning to Moses that if he or any of his kin meddled with the old man again, they would infallibly get six months in gaol.²²

Moses Freedman and his unnamed Jewish competitor were pedlars of the "basket" variety—in Rabbi Wise's words, "dumb and homeless." The task of ekeing out a precarious livelihood in a land whose language and mores were new and strange was fraught with heartache and often led to bitter conflicts with fellow pedlars. For the onlooker such incidents must have provided enjoyable entertainment and comic relief but for the unhappy principals it was pathetic. The process of adjustment and acculturation was not easy:

One day in August, 1879, Moses Freedman was pushing his handcart of goods down Main Street when he was doused with water from an upper window of the American House Hotel. Quite naturally Freedman was angered and he sought out Constable Mitchell, demanding

²²*Manitoba Free Press*, May 20, 1879.

that the officer investigate the source of the unkind prank immediately. The constable and the pedlar came into the hotel and Freedman asked Johnston, the proprietor, to identify the prankster. Johnston replied with a punch and, before the constable could intervene, a *mélée* ensued. After some brisk sparring Constable Mitchell succeeded in separating the antagonists. The results were a sore head for poor Moses Freedman and a warrant for the hotel man. At court the following day Freedman lost his case, his charge against the assailant having boomeranged. The magistrate ruled that Freedman had brought the assault upon himself by the use of "bad language." As for the upper storey water-thrower—he was forgotten in the excitement.²³

Freedman Again reads the heading over a news report one month later, in September, 1879. By this time the pedlar's misfortunes had achieved for him a certain unwarranted notoriety, as well as a nickname—"Apple John." This time he called on a woman of ill-repute to collect seventy-five cents which she owed him. The woman refused to pay the debt and in the argument which followed his shirt was torn off his back. Again Freedman was in court, demanding justice. The case was decided against him. He was fined with costs, amounting to seven dollars and sixty cents, ten times the insignificant debt owing to him.²⁴

Some days later Freedman had a second encounter with his competitor, the fruit pedlar, at which time he attempted "to improve the morals of the son" by administering a sound beating to the lad. Again Freedman was haled into court and again he was fined a total of fifteen dollars and fifty cents. When, however, a witness' account reinforced his own version of the incident, the fine was reduced to two dollars. Little wonder that near the end of October, 1879, Moses Freedman left Winnipeg for parts unknown. "Old Apple John's familiar face will be seen in the halls of justice no more forever,"²⁵ wrote his newspaper biographer.

III

Pioneer settlers became propaganda agents for Manitoba to their friends and relatives in other parts of the world. Sometimes the propaganda was negative—those who were unhappy in their new circumstances conveyed discouraging impressions about settlement. But most

²³*Ibid.*, August 13, 1879.

²⁵*Ibid.*, October 22, 1879.

²⁴*Ibid.*, September 27, 1879.

were satisfied and transmitted good tidings and favourable evaluations. Such settlers encouraged and frequently pleaded with relatives to join them in the new land.

The Coblenz brothers were good ambassadors on Manitoba's behalf. Having adjusted well during their short period of residence, they wrote to relations and acquaintances telling of their satisfaction. One of the brothers, while on a business trip to Chicago in 1881, took it upon himself to urge Alsatian-Jewish countrymen who were living there to come to Winnipeg and see for themselves.²⁶ He further urged the Chicagoans to spread word among Alsatian immigrants, due in Chicago during the spring of 1882, that they should come to live in Canada's northwest. Why remain in a crowded city he asked, when the health-giving open spaces of the north needed and welcomed settlers?

During a two-year period between 1880 and 1882 a tremendous land boom took place in Manitoba. The Canadian Pacific Railway was in the process of spanning Canada, linking province to province, and a heavy influx of immigrants was expected into the prairie lands of Manitoba. Land values sky-rocketed and Manitobans indulged in a wild buying and selling spree for nearly two years. A pivotal figure in the promotion of land sales was Joseph Wolf, a Jew from London, England, who had been converted to Protestantism. For about fifteen years Wolf resided in Winnipeg and was prominently connected with public life in the city, serving as alderman, school trustee, and a director of Winnipeg General Hospital. Wolf also served as police magistrate for twelve years.

Joseph Wolf never hid his Jewish origin and was considered an understanding friend by residents of the Jewish community. He frequently attended celebrations of the Jewish community and was a popular speaker at such gatherings.²⁷ During the years of his police magistracy, Wolf presided at the internecine court quarrels that beset some of the Jewish residents from time to time; and he was a respected arbiter among the disputants. As a former son of the Chosen People he did not hesitate to demand exemplary behaviour of the Israelites. During his school trusteeship Wolf had occasion to visit classes at the public schools. During one such visit he is reported to have asked whether there were Jewish students in the particular classroom. To them he directed this charge: "When I was a lad I

²⁶*Ibid.*, January 4, 1881.

²⁷When Rabbi Friedman's daughter, Lena, was married to Mr. Ben Rosenthal, Joseph Wolf paid tribute to the young couple and their families: *Free Press*, March 10, 1884.

attended school in London and I know that because I was of the Jewish faith my behavior was being watched particularly and so I behaved accordingly. May I suggest to you Jewish boys and girls that you behave better than the best among the others!"²⁸

Wolf's excellent reputation in Winnipeg and his sympathies for the lot of the Jews travelled far. In 1892 during another of the enforced exodus of Russian Jews, Joseph Wolf was consulted by the Russian-Jewish Committee of London, England, concerning the possible resettlement of Jewish refugees in Manitoba. Alfred Wolff, chairman of the London committee, wrote Joseph Wolf in Winnipeg:

I write you on behalf of our unfortunate co-religionists who are seeking in other lands a refuge from the cruel persecution to which they have been exposed in Russia. You are, I am sure, as anxious as we are here to help these unfortunate people, so I need not apologize for applying to you as a prominent citizen of Winnipeg for information as to what chance of success may be found for them in your neighborhood.

Alfred Wolff wrote further that the recommendation had been made to the Russian-Jewish Committee to consider a settlement of refugees north of Winnipeg.

It has been suggested to us to send a certain number of families to form a colony by the Hudson Bay railway line between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, and in case we do, I understand that work would be given them in construction of the railway. I should feel very much obliged if you would inform me what you know of the suitability of this locality for colonization, as to soil and climate, etc., and also whether you think the company is a solid concern, and the railway certain to be constructed. If 50 families were sent out to be settled as above, I presume the Jewish community of Winnipeg would be able to aid them with advice in selecting land and installing themselves.²⁹

Alfred Wolff informed Joseph Wolf that he was also writing to Hyman Miller, a Jewish resident in Winnipeg, and he expressed the desire to hear also from a Mr. Fonseca³⁰ who "has been taking much interest in the unfortunate Russian fugitive Jews."

Joseph Wolf framed a careful reply. He doubted the wisdom of sending a large Jewish group to Manitoba since the province was "entirely agricultural, and that only such emigrants as are fitted for that vocation can at the present time possibly succeed." Wolf was

²⁸Related to me by Mr. M. J. Finkelstein, Q.C.

²⁹*Manitoba Free Press*, April 9, 1892.

³⁰William Gomez de Fonseca, a respected pioneer settler in Winnipeg and descendant of a West Indies Portuguese Jewish family, though himself a devout Protestant.

of the opinion that the selection of lands should be entrusted to a Canadian expert rather than to be guided by "interested parties and owners of blocks of land now in England." In so far as employment on the Hudson Bay Railway was concerned, Wolf indicated that the work was already begun and that if the work were to be further continued "Russian Jews or any other nationality would be no bar to acceptance of such to work on the road." Joseph Wolf waxed enthusiastic over the Manitoba clime.

With regard to the climate we have reason to consider, and justly so that it is one of the finest in the world. It is true that our winters are somewhat trying, but certainly less inclement than those in Russia. Our springs, summers and autumns are ideal. I cannot use any other word to express what a glorious climate we enjoy, and am an enthusiastic believer that no country on earth offers a grander field for the man able and willing to work, and adapt himself to his environment, as the province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories of Canada.³¹

Joseph Wolf wrote a highly favourable description of the local Jewish community. He could not say for a certainty that they were expert in the matter of selecting land but he was fully confident that they would offer sympathy and tangible aid to assist their co-religionists as far as they were able: "They fully understand the hardships the immigrants in such circumstances must undergo, and they also more than any other class fully realize the glorious privileges enjoyed by all who make and adopt this country as their future home."³² In concluding his letter, Joseph Wolf paid tribute to Mr. Fonseca as being one of Winnipeg's oldest settlers "deeply interested in advancing the material prosperity of our province," Wolf promised to speak to Fonseca concerning the Russian-Jewish immigrants suggesting that Fonseca, in turn, would correspond directly with the London Committee. Wolf and Fonseca did evince a sincere interest in assisting the Russian-Jewish Committee but a short while later Montreal Jewish leaders assumed the responsibility for the resettlement project.

During 1880 and 1881 a number of Jews arrived with their families. They engaged in a variety of enterprises, some within the city of Winnipeg, others elsewhere in Manitoba. A list of their names and their occupations follows:

Adolphe Bieber, wholesale jeweller
George Frankfurter, dry goods merchant
Louis Wertheim, tobacconist

³¹*Manitoba Free Press*, April 9, 1892.

³²*Ibid.*

Philip Brown, tailor and clothing merchant
Victor Victorson, hardware and real estate
Harry Weixelbaum, hotel keeper
M. K. Auerbach, book dealer
Max Goldstine, men's clothing
David Ripstein, jewellery salesman
Simon Ripstein, jewellery salesman
William Harris, salesman for Montreal firm
Louis Vineberg, pawn broker and auctioneer
Isaac Berkman, pedlar
Hiram Rosenthal, tailor
Isaac Goldbloom, pedlar
William Goldbloom, pedlar
Isaac Goldstein, trader
Jacob Kleinber, pedlar
Joseph Levine, bartender
D. Cohen, land speculator
Isaac Cohen, second-hand dealer
J. Silverstone, pedlar
Hubert Kohen, salesman (Maxwell & Co. Farm Machinery)
M. Drozdowitz, clothing merchant
Hyman Miller, co-owner of Miller and Morse Hardware Company
Abraham Benjamin, clergyman
Dr. Hiram N. Vineberg, physician
Mr. Tobias, merchant³³

The Manitoba census of 1881 indicates that there were thirty-three Jewish families in the province—twenty-one in Winnipeg and twelve scattered through other communities. Together with their family members they constituted a total Jewish population of approximately one hundred. The members of this small Jewish community little expected that their modest ranks would be swelled almost overnight as a result of a catastrophe which would soon befall their brethren in another part of the world.

³³Henderson Directory, 1880 and 1881.

Chapter Three

RUSSIAN-JEWISH IMMIGRATION

LITTLE DID EARLY MANITOBA JEWRY realize how intimately they would be affected when in May, 1880, they read the first disturbing news dispatches concerning Jews in Russia. The Czarist régime had begun a systematic campaign of anti-Semitism against its Jewish citizens. The *Manitoba Free Press* registered great surprise at these unfortunate developments and wondered if they might be the result of Disraeli's resignation from the British prime ministry. Whatever the reasons, they found the news to be "hardly credible."¹ And yet, incredible though they seemed, reports of the mounting fury being unleashed against Russian Jewry continued to appear with increasing frequency in the local press. Detailed stories related that Jews in Bialystok, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Peraieslav, and in many other Russian cities and towns were being massacred, and that the Czarist government was determined to rid itself of its Jewish populace. The western civilized world found it difficult to believe that such barbaric events could transpire in the modern day.

The *Manitoba Free Press* was moved to write a powerful editorial entitled "The Jews of Russia" in which it listed the indignities, brutalities, and horrors to which the Jews of Russia, "a peaceable, intelligent and industrious element of the population," were subjected. It concluded with a plea to the Czar, "the semi-divine father of his people," that he appeal to "their instincts of obedience" and restrain his subjects from continuing to persecute the unfortunate Jewish race.²

This plea for justice by a humane editor in Manitoba was only one of many similar appeals made in democratic lands all over the world. The Jewish citizens of these communities must certainly have been impressed and reassured but in Russia the pleas fell upon deaf Czarist ears. The pogroms continued unabated. No avenue was left to Russian Jews but to flee to wherever refuge might be found. During the summer of 1881 several thousand victims crossed over the western border of Russia into Brody in Austrian Galicia to seek temporary refuge. Towards the end of 1881 these Jewish refugees began to move

¹*Manitoba Free Press*, May 8, 1880.

²*Ibid.*, December 26, 1881.

into the United States in large numbers. Months later, in 1882, they began coming to Canada.

Editorials, mass meetings in London, Philadelphia, and New York, necessary though they were to rally world opinion, were futile by themselves; action was the order of the day. The Alliance Israelite Universelle was the first organization to send a representative to Brody to assist the refugees. In England the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Manning, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Dean Bradley, and other outstanding Englishmen proceeded to launch a committee to raise funds on behalf of the homeless Russian Jews for the purposes of temporary relief and eventual emigration.³ In consequence of a call to protest Russia's brutalities signed by these English leaders, as well as by the Bishops of London, Gloucester, Manchester, and Oxford, Charles Darwin, Samuel Morley, Professor Jennet, and Matthew Arnold, a public meeting was scheduled at the Mansion House in London for February 1. Russian authorities were angered by the response of the English but the latter were undeterred in their determination to make right, as Christians, the unchristian acts of the Czarist government and the Russian populace.

On February 2, 1882, the Mansion House Hall was crowded for hours before the proceedings began at which the Lord Mayor presided flanked by several of his distinguished countrymen. A letter was read before the assemblage from Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who was unable to attend. A resolution was adopted declaring that while "we disclaim any right to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia and desire the preservation of amicable relations with the country, it is our duty to express our opinion that the laws of Russia concerning the Jews tend to degrade her influence." The Earl of Shaftesbury, Cardinal Manning, and Canon Farrar spoke in support of the resolution.⁴ The stirring words of Cardinal Manning who spoke on behalf of the Roman Catholics were ominously prophetic of events which were to transpire within half a century. The cardinal invoked "the laws of humanity, of nature and of God, which are the foundation of all other laws" and maintained that these gave the Mansion House meeting the right and the obligation to protest the uncivilized acts of hostility being perpetrated in Russia against Jews. Further, he called attention to the anti-Semitic movement in Germany and expressed the fear that it would set off a great holocaust of animosity and violence throughout the world similar to that in Russia.

This was indeed a unique and historic meeting when Catholic and

³*Ibid.*, January 16, 1882.

⁴*Ibid.*, February 2, 1882.

Protestant leaders gathered to express their abhorrence at the inhumanity directed against the Jews. The resolutions of the occasion were forwarded to Mr. Gladstone with the hope that the British government would exercise its friendly influence in behalf of the persecuted Jews. Nor was the gathering content with resolutions alone; a relief fund was opened and monies were subscribed by those in attendance.

I

One of those present at the Mansion House meeting was Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, Canadian High Commissioner to London, who was responsive to the urgent need for resettling the displaced persons. Even prior to the Mansion House gathering he had hastened to write to Sir John A. Macdonald, the Canadian prime minister, on January 25, 1882: "The Jewish persecution in Russia has induced me to write Rothschild suggesting that I would like to discuss with him the feasibility of removing the agricultural Jews to Canada. I have only sent my note today. It seems not a bad opportunity of interesting the Hebrews in our North West."⁵ The effects of the bloody drama in Russia were beginning to come closer to Manitoba and to the northwest. Pursuant to the Mansion House gathering, Galt wrote another letter to Macdonald on February 3, 1882, in which he informed the Prime Minister that he had been nominated to act on the Mansion House Committee and had consented to do so. He reported that "these Russian Jews are a superior class of people, partly farmer, but generally trade people. Most of them were well off and though many have been ruined, still my opinion is that a large proportion will still be found with sufficient means to establish themselves in Canada or the United States if Russia will let them go."⁶ As subsequent events were to prove, Galt was unduly optimistic about finding Russian Jews with "sufficient means." In the same letter Galt informed Macdonald that American Jews were promoting immigration to the United States and he reflected "that what was good for them could not be bad for us."⁷ Galt promised to convey information of further developments to Macdonald, and if possible "to suggest some mode by which we may get a share."

While Galt was corresponding from London with Sir John A. Macdonald, John Taylor, the Icelandic agent in Manitoba had writ-

⁵B. G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945), p. 261.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁷*Ibid.*

ten to the Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada.⁸ It was Taylor who, in 1875, drew to the attention of Lord Dufferin, then Governor General, the unhappy conditions of Icelanders who were victims of volcanic eruptions in their homeland. Lord Dufferin responded to Taylor's appeal with the result that Icelanders were welcomed to Manitoba in large numbers. Bearing in mind the favourable reception accorded to his first appeal, Taylor wrote in 1882 to request that the Governor General intercede "in behalf of a class of sufferers in another country from the effects of a more terrible eruption, not however of a physical but of a social nature, namely of the Jews in Russia and Poland."⁹

In the meantime, Macdonald wrote to the Marquis of Lorne on February 20, 1882, and made a passing reference to Galt's recommendation of early February. Macdonald wrote, "I enclose you a note from Galt, by which you will see he has been attending to the Jews. I hope something will come of this. He will be instructed to act for the Immigration Department, and we are quite ready to assign the Jews lands."¹⁰ Sir John, it would appear from this correspondence, was not unwilling to allow Jewish immigration. Yet, in a letter to Galt a week later his attitude towards Jewish immigration was distinctly patronizing. "The Old Clo' move is a good one," he wrote. "A sprinkling of Jews in the North West would do good. They would at once go in for peddling and politics and be of much use in the New Country as Cheap Jacks and Chapmen."¹¹ Macdonald did not respond with the magnanimity of the English leaders, nor even with the generosity of his High Commissioner in London.

The initial response of the Jews of Montreal and Toronto to the needs of their Russian-Jewish brethren was positive and enthusiastic. Montreal Jewish leaders went so far as to propose the foundation of an International Colonization Society of Canada whose primary object it would be to resettle large numbers of Russian Jews in the northwest. They further proposed that one million dollars be raised to implement this worthwhile project, but the idea soon came to naught. For the time being funds were raised in Montreal and Toronto for the immediate rescue of the displaced Russian Jews.

In early March, 1882, Alexander Galt was at work in co-operation with the Mansion House Committee in London helping to facilitate the settlement of Jews in Manitoba. He recommended that two or three leaders be sent ahead of the immigrants to make arrangements for the arrival of their countrymen in Canada. This had been the

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 263.

procedure followed by other ethnic groups who had migrated earlier from Europe. Further, he advised that money spent on immigration should be in the form of loans rather than outright donations, such loans to be repaid in five or seven years and secured by mortgage.¹² This financial arrangement was designed to help settle current immigrants as well as to provide a means of helping others. In normal circumstances a small advance party would have made sound practical sense but the exigencies of the times made this recommendation unworkable. As for aid in the form of loans, in theory it was an excellent idea but, practically speaking, it was doubtful that repayment could be achieved in the short time suggested by Galt. A further study of the progress of the group after its settlement in Canada indicates that a very large proportion of the émigrés were in difficult financial circumstances for many years after their arrival in the land. Like the ideas of the Montreal Jewish group, Galt's suggestions were possible only much later in connection with other resettlement ventures.

II

In May of 1882 the vanguard of homeless Russian Jews assigned by the Mansion House Committee to Canada arrived in Montreal. A few remained there. From Montreal the rest of the group was taken to Toronto where again some were placed and the balance was sent on to Winnipeg. The *Manitoba Free Press* of May 23, 1882, reports that "a number of Jewish refugees who have been driven from Russia by persecution, robbery and murder, started a few days ago from Toronto for Winnipeg." Philip Brown, a respected Jewish resident of Winnipeg, informed the newspaper that on the basis of information received from Toronto he understood the party to consist of fifteen men, eight women, and one child. Members of the Winnipeg Jewish community were making efforts to secure immediate employment for the men who were carpenters, blacksmiths, and bricklayers. Brown further told the reporter that he and his co-religionists had enlisted the aid of Mr. Magelsdorff, assistant immigration agent at the government sheds, in arranging living quarters until provision could be made for permanent habitation. From a Mr. Montgomery, Philip Brown received promise of employment for the blacksmiths in the immigrant party. Brown was confident that an awareness of the sufferings which these people had undergone would "open the hearts

¹²*Manitoba Free Press*, March 2, 1882.

of the people of Winnipeg" moving them to give "the foreigners the opportunity of helping themselves."

On Friday, May 26, 1882, fifteen men and four women did arrive. Four more men were to follow with the group's baggage, making twenty-three in all.¹³ On arrival, they were immediately installed in the immigration buildings. They were young people, none of them appearing to be over thirty years of age, and they were classified vocationally as three carpenters, one blacksmith, one cabinet-maker, one painter, one dyer, and eight farmers. According to the news report they were "stalwart looking and evidently intelligent."¹⁴ Willing to work and eager to earn an honest livelihood, they looked forward to the opportunity for employment. The Jewish community exerted itself wholeheartedly to make the newcomers as comfortable as possible, but because the local Jewish settlement was so small they welcomed "the assistance of any who may be able to help, especially in finding immediate employment for the strangers."¹⁵ Seven men of the Winnipeg Jewish community volunteered to take turns in acting as interpreters at the immigration building each day from morning to evening. When a refugee was given employment, one of these interpreters accompanied him to the place where he was to work and assisted the employer in giving him the necessary directions.

In the meanwhile the ladies of the Jewish community provided the refugees with an excellent dinner of welcome, "all the delicacies of the season being served in abundance and it is needless to add were thoroughly enjoyed."¹⁶ Through the press the local ladies made an appeal for contributions of clothing, particularly for the women who were almost in rags. While they gave of their energy and modest means unstintingly, the Winnipeg Jews worried considerably about those yet to come. The advance party of twenty-three brought with them the information that two hundred and forty-seven were to follow in a matter of some days. At a hurried meeting Winnipeg Jewish leaders decided upon a plan of action. They determined to send a dispatch to the Anglo-Jewish Committee in Toronto urging that further influx of immigrants be temporarily delayed, but in preparation for their eventual arrival they decided, too, to enlist the aid of Winnipeg citizenry at large. Accordingly a telegram was dispatched to Toronto requesting that additional immigrants be detained in that city for the moment "until better arrangements than now exist could be effected."¹⁷ The local committee also addressed a communication to

¹³Ibid., May 27, 1882.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., May 29, 1882.

¹⁷H. E. Wilder, "An Outline of the History of the Jews in Canada" in *The One Hundredth Anniversary Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Daily Press, 1932).

the Winnipeg City Council concerning the plight of the Russian-Jewish refugees and made a request for financial assistance from the city.

The Toronto Jewish community, themselves under heavy pressure because of a large refugee influx, ignored the Winnipeg request for postponement. In a return telegraphic reply signed by Messrs. M. Samuels, L. Samuels, and Benjamin, all of Toronto, they tersely informed the Winnipeggers that two hundred and forty-seven Jewish men, women, and children would embark on the steamer *Ontario* at Sarnia, travelling by boat to Duluth, Minnesota, and from there to Winnipeg. They held out some small hope that Sir Alexander Galt, who was recently arrived in Canada, would secure assistance from the Dominion government.

The Winnipeg City Council considered the request for assistance to the local newcomers shortly after the petition was received. Its members were sympathetic to the plight of the unfortunates and made several proposals:

(1) That the Mayor call upon the people of Winnipeg to take up subscriptions for the distressed immigrants.

(2) That the matter should be referred to the Dominion government "as it had paid out a good deal of money for other immigrants who had means."

(3) That the Minister of Public Works for Manitoba co-operate by employing these people in work of drainage.

(4) In the meanwhile the Chairman of the Council Relief Committee do the utmost within his means to relieve the hardship of the arrivals.¹⁸

Again, in Winnipeg as earlier in London, England, Christians responded with understanding and generosity. His Lordship, the Bishop of Rupert's Land, cordially received a Jewish delegation and gave of his personal funds the sum of one hundred dollars. Moreover, he drafted letters to Messrs. Fortin and Pentreath, and the Venerable Archdeacon Pinkham urging their support of this worthy cause. Rev. Silcox of the First Congregational church made an appeal for help to his flock at a Sunday service. Two of the leading business establishments, Stobart, Eden and Company and R. J. Whitla, donated mattresses and ticking for pillows. Among the Jewish residents of Winnipeg the amount of three hundred and sixty dollars was raised.

On June 1, 1882, the second group of Russian-Jewish immigrants arrived in Winnipeg. They numbered two hundred and forty-seven.

¹⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, May 30, 1882. Aldermen who spoke to the subject were Messrs. Bathgate, More, McKicken, Wilson, and Monkman.

The first arrivals had cleaned out the immigration sheds and had set up quarters for the next contingent. Settled in the shelter near the mouth of the Assiniboine River the latter were provided by the Jewish residents with a most welcome meal. "It was clear to the spectators who happened to be present that the kindness was well-timed. The travellers are as if nearly famished, and their evidently destitute condition touched the sympathies of those who saw them."¹⁹

Scarcely finished with their supper the men were informed that if they wished to go to work immediately and work through the night, they might all do so and that their wage would be paid at the rate of twenty-five cents per hour. This offer was made by the firm of Jarvis and Berridge. The first work of the immigrants in Manitoba consisted of unloading two rafts of lumber which had been brought down from Emerson by the steamer *Omega*. It was reported that the people almost wept when the offer was interpreted to them.

With the promptness of a company of soldiers they fell into line and marched to the bank of the Red River, a little south of Broadway bridge, where they were seen at work. At a late hour, thirty-seven of them were laboring industriously and showing that they were neither averse nor unaccustomed to work. They impressed their employers and others who saw them very favorably, were regarded as intelligent looking and of good, strong physical constitutions, and were thought to give promise of making hard-working and valuable settlers of the new country.²⁰

Jarvis and Berridge were expecting about five or six million feet of lumber to unload in Winnipeg. They believed that they would be able to furnish the newcomers with employment sporadically for some time to come. In the meantime it was hoped that with the money thus earned and with whatever assistance that might be found from other sources enough would be provided "to keep the wolf from the door." To supplement these modest resources, William Hespeler, Dominion immigration agent in Winnipeg, sent on a quantity of provisions which included one thousand pounds of flour, ten pounds of tea, two kegs of syrup, and two hundred pounds of oatmeal. Hespeler named Victor Victorson, a Winnipeg Jewish resident, as the official liaison man between himself and the Jewish immigrants.

A humorous touch to the otherwise grim and serious problem of integration was the verbal tussle between the *Manitoba Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Times*. On Saturday, June 3, 1882 the *Times* reported on the Sabbath services at the immigrant sheds as follows: "The Jewish immigrants who recently arrived, held divine service in

¹⁹Ibid., June 2, 1882.

²⁰Ibid.

the immigrant sheds this morning, presided over by one of the old Jewish rabbits. Saturday, as is well known, is observed among them as Sunday. Those who witnessed the service say it was a very novel sight."²¹ The *Manitoba Free Press*, always ready to fire a barb at its competitor, retorted sharply two days later:

We observe by our esteemed contemporary that the divine service held at the immigrant sheds on Saturday was presided over by "one of the old Jewish rabbits." This is a base calumny. The community of Jews in this city are not in possession of any rabbits, and if they had, it is not likely that they would permit one to preside over such a grave occasion. Our contemporary should study up the difference between a "rabbit" and a "rabbi."²²

Rabbit or rabbi, it may be easily surmised that the prayers offered up at that Sabbath service in the Winnipeg sheds were mixed with feelings of thanksgiving for a safe arrival in Canada and with hopes for future happiness.

On June 10, a further seventy immigrants arrived, making three hundred and forty in all. The original Winnipeg Jewish community found it difficult to absorb a group three and one-half times as large as itself. On the very day on which the third immigrant party of seventy arrived the *Free Press* evaluated the current situation soberly and fairly. In an editorial it proposed that "a little judicious and prompt cooperation on the part of the Dominion Government would enable them to establish a hopeful colony and be the means of influencing thousands of their fellow-countrymen to come and fill up this vast country with an industrious population. Instead, however, the newcomers have become disillusioned and there is little hope that others will follow to Manitoba. It is a sad commentary."²³ The *Free Press* considered the Dominion government to be derelict in the operation of its immigration machinery.

III

In the light of the uncertain circumstances confronting them, it was inevitable that the immigrants should experience dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The insecurity of the future was demoralizing. Victor Victorson, the official liaison man between the Dominion immigration agent and the Jewish community, found himself in the hopeless position of attempting to satisfy all the diverse needs of the newcomers.

²¹Winnipeg Daily Times, June 3, 1882. ²²Manitoba Free Press, June 5, 1882.

²³Ibid., June 10, 1882.

When, for example, he arranged employment for the men in the party with the Jarvis and Berridge Company for boat unloading he had the task of dividing the wages fairly among all. One misguided Jewish citizen charged Victorson with mishandling the funds.²⁴ Victorson hastened to give full and careful accounting of his administration through the press. Messrs. Philip Brown, Louis Wertheim, and George Frankfurter, all reliable citizens, defended him upholding his good character and severely criticizing the accuser for his false charge.²⁵ When the immigrants learned of the unkindness suffered by Victorson, one of them, S. Linetsky, called at the newspaper office in company with an interpreter "to express the feelings of the immigrants themselves in regard to their treatment by Mr. Victorson."²⁶ Linetsky brought with him a written document signed by nineteen of the leading men among the *émigrés* in which they expressed confidence in their overseer. The document was placed on exhibit at the *Free Press* office. "Its characters are Hebrew," wrote the newspaper, "but the language is German." More correctly, it was written in Yiddish and contained a testimonial to Victorson as well as a denial of the unwarranted charges levelled by the disgruntled individual.

And now the immigrants were about to discover that by far the most complex aspect of their transition from one continent to another would be their integration into the life pattern of the new land. In early July, 1882, Victorson was able to find work for a number of Jewish immigrants splitting rails at Whitemouth, Manitoba. P. Enright, the contractor had made arrangements for the group's accommodation in a large shanty. Unfortunately his generosity was not shared by the foreman on the job who was a brutish bully. When the Jews arrived at their place of work he gave vent to his "sportiveness" by giving each man of the band a thump with a heavy bludgeon. Nor was the persecution then over. In the same evening, after the Jewish workers had retired to their makeshift lodging, about seventy non-Jewish labourers set upon them and drove them out of their hut. Stones and missiles were thrown at them and one of them was severely injured. The rowdies were not satisfied and drove the poor, defenceless Jewish labourers into the railway cars nearby. From there they were driven out and their kosher food provisions were stolen from them. With great difficulty they fled the cars and made their way to a Whitemouth hotel. A humane Swedish machinist who was lodging there persuaded the hotel-keeper to admit the Jews. Fearful of the damage that might be done to his premises the proprietor was not

²⁴*Ibid.*, June 17, 1882.

²⁵*Ibid.*, June 19, 1882.

²⁶*Ibid.*, June 20, 1882.

disposed to protect the refugees but was finally prevailed upon by the unnamed Swede to allow the "poor hounded wretches" to remain until morning. Had it not been for his intervention the Jews might have suffered another pogrom. Although a number of the Whitemouth band left for Winnipeg immediately, some hardy individuals remained at the job of rail-splitting. In commenting on the Whitemouth incident, the *Free Press* urged that "lawlessness of this character ought to be suppressed with an iron hand, and it seems, to say the least, shameful that those poor creatures, persecuted out of their country, should meet treatment so much like that from which they have fled." The newspaper concluded that the authorities should take proper steps "towards settling these people in a position where they will not be exposed to such brutal insults."²⁷

Some two weeks after the Whitemouth incident another savage event occurred which came to the attention of the authorities. A large number of the Jewish immigrants were at work laying tracks for the Canadian Pacific Railway at Rosser Station in Manitoba. Charles Wicks, a railway labourer, attacked Kieva Barsky without cause striking him a severe blow on the head with an iron bar. Unlike his compatriots at Whitemouth who failed to press charges against their attackers, Barsky decided to put Canadian justice to the test. On August 11, 1882, the case of *The Queen v. Charles Wicks* was heard before Chief Justice Wood. Considerable community interest was manifested in the trial which was a tedious affair, an interpreter having to be employed for Barsky's sake. Jewish witnesses took oaths on a Hebrew bible and wore their hats at the swearing in.²⁸ Chief Justice Wood, after hearing the testimony of the prosecution and the defence, said in his summation that while he had no doubt whatever in his mind that the intent of the accused was as charged in the indictment, yet owing to the somewhat contradictory nature of the evidence, he would give the defendant the benefit of the doubt and convict him of common assault with one month's imprisonment. In delivering his judgment, Chief Justice Wood gave a long and impassioned address during which he reviewed with poetic eloquence the history of the Jews, their times of greatness and triumph, their years of dispersion and suffering.²⁹ Chief Justice Wood's grandiloquent address in the trial of *The Queen v. Charles Wicks*, had a salutary effect. If Wicks and

²⁷*Ibid.*, July 4, 1882.

²⁸In 1953, Mr. Justice Samuel Freedman was sworn into office on the Queen's Bench and at that ceremony he, too, covered his head with the traditional skull cap.

²⁹*Manitoba Free Press*, August 11, 1882. The writer has included the full text of Chief Justice Wood's address from the Bench in his volume, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1955).

others like him had believed that there was a majority-minority standard for justice in this land they were disabused of such a mistaken notion. It was now evident that equality of justice was extended to everyone alike. Minority ethnic groups were beginning to understand that they could seek justice without fear or hesitation. Whether or not they understood the language of the land, whether they had sojourned here one week, one month, or one year, they were all equal in the sight of the law. The result of Kieva Barsky's suit was more than a personal vindication. An important principle of legal equality had been established.

IV

In early August, two months after the arrival of the Russian-Jewish immigrants, an editorial appeared in the columns of the *Winnipeg Daily Times*, carrying that paper's evaluation of the immigrant situation in Winnipeg.³⁰ It was a splenetic outburst in which the refugees were accused of idleness, uselessness, and lack of cleanliness and it urged a simple solution to their problems—deportation to Europe. Obviously ignoring the serious attempts that were being made by the local Jewish community to make the newcomers self-sufficient, the editorial concluded with the advice that “people of their own faith resident among us should give them a good plain talking to, and point out to them in strong terms their present mode of life must be abandoned with the least possible delay.”

Two days later the *Free Press* conveyed its impressions and findings on the same subject. In a news story titled “The Jewish Refugees—Their Future in Manitoba Not Hopeless” the reporter maintained that both the refugees and the local Jewish residents were to be congratulated for the progress made to date. He reported that whenever labour opportunities presented themselves the immigrants went to work willingly. But he urged that Winnipeggers become cognizant of the disadvantages under which these people were struggling and make allowances accordingly. “It is not denied,” the *Free Press* reported, “that they came here only half-civilized; indeed, after having been as a people, for ages ground down by their oppressors, they could hardly be otherwise.” The reporter continued, “Again, besides being ignorant of many things which Canadians think all the world should know, they are ignorant of the English language, and their helplessness is in no small degree increased by this fact.”³¹ As proof of their pro-

³⁰ *Winnipeg Daily Times*, August 9, 1882, p. 2.

³¹ *Manitoba Free Press*, August 11, 1882.

gress he cited the fact that for almost a month, no assistance in the way of food supplies was required. The very few among them who came with small means were demonstrating that they were quite capable of enterprises of some magnitude. For example it was learned that one among the group bought out an entire crop of sixty acres in the vicinity of the Boyne Settlement and planned, with his two sons, to harvest and sell the crop. The *Free Press* further reported that Victor Victorson was currently away with a delegation of the people to select land for them in the west, possibly in the Qu'Appelle region. After the land was chosen a group would go out to make preparations for the following year's operation. The news story concluded with the information that "the immigrants do not desire to form an isolated group, but rather mix up with the people." For the time being, however, being poor and lonely in a new land it was understandable that the families should be located close together, in order to be able to assist one another "as well as to have some friendly association together, like people of all other nationalities."⁸² The *Free Press* reporter wrote with a good sociological insight into the group's needs and possibilities. Give these people time and opportunity, he insisted, and they would surmount the language barrier, become acculturated to the mores of the land, and develop into productive citizens.

V

What of the feelings of the immigrants themselves during this early and trying period? Their first reactions recalled the experiences of other ethnic groups who had settled in Manitoba before the Jews. There were the familiar complaints that the climate was severe, the mud impossible, the sanitary facilities primitive, and the housing intolerable. S. F. Rodin, an intelligent member of the Russian-Jewish immigrant party in Winnipeg, expressed his reactions in a letter to the Russian Hebrew publication, *Hamelitz*, in June, 1882:

I know not in what to dip my pen, in the inkstand before me, or in the flow of tears running from the eyes of the unfortunates who have come here with me, in order to describe their lamentable condition. One hears nothing but weeping and wailing over the prospect of wasting one's youth and spending it vainly in this desolate spot known as Winnipeg. We were exiled to a wilderness. Even such work as chopping wood, hewing stone or digging the soil is not to be found, and the cost of living is extremely high.⁸³

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³*Hamelitz*, June 6, 1882.

But in September, only three months later, Rodin wrote to *Hamelitz* once more, this time reversing his hasty judgment of the earlier date:

I know that my first letter must have been a source of anguish to many. Perhaps I exaggerated somewhat, but truly, our living conditions during the first few months after our arrival were unendurable. Thank God, the situation has improved somewhat. We have gradually accustomed ourselves to the hard work. Here, in this new country, even the cultivated and well-bred among us have had to discard our starched shirts and shined shoes and have gotten down to work.³⁴

Still Rodin complained that the Jewish educational facilities in Winnipeg were poor and that the children were growing up without proper Hebrew religious instruction. He was convinced that the environment would allow for "a good planting of seeds" in the minds of Jewish youth and he urged that serious efforts be made to establish a Jewish educational system in Winnipeg. Concluding his correspondence, Rodin wrote:

We observed the New Year Holiday fully and completely, worshipping in a tent at a railway station forty miles from Winnipeg. We collected from among us contributions of three dollars each, a total of one hundred dollars and ordered from New York City a fine Sefer Torah and a Shofar. On the New Year days we ceased from our labors and we gathered in a large tent. We prayed and read out of the Sefer Torah. The local residents looked on with wonder and admiration, commenting: "Look! though far removed from their homes and their people they nevertheless make every effort to worship in the manner known to them."³⁵

VI

In 1882 the Canadian Pacific Railway was laying track across the country for many hundreds of miles west of Winnipeg. Five thousand men were employed on the railroad project which was to bind Canada into a unified country. Among those who helped lay the steel that bound a nation were a band of one hundred and fifty Russian-Jewish immigrants. The C.P.R. made special provision for this group to live together during the four months, from July through October of 1882, when they worked along a 100-mile line as far as Medicine Hat. The men lodged in two-storey boarding cars using the upper section as sleeping-quarters and the lower section as a mess-hall; and the foreman of the group was one of their number, Kaufman.

³⁴*Ibid.*, September, 1882.

³⁵*Ibid.* Rodin pays particular tribute to two of his co-religionists for arranging the High Holiday Services, Moshe Balcovske and H. Kaufman.

Because most of them observed the religious dietary laws, special food provisions were made for them, and because they were devout men, they were permitted to refrain from labour on the Sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday at sundown. Naturally their wages were deducted but they gladly agreed to this arrangement, rather than desecrate the sacred day of rest. They carried with them a Holy Scroll and during the entire period of service with the C.P.R. they were permitted the use of a tent for their weekly service of worship. The railway officials encouraged religious devotions among all their railway labourers. Every Sunday Christians of all denominations conducted a joint interdenominational service which was arranged co-operatively by the Catholic and Protestant clergy.

Most of the Jewish group who laid track for the C.P.R. earned from three to five hundred dollars each, sums which it was expected would tide them over until they could find permanent jobs. Unfortunately, not a few were caught up in the heavy land speculation which was then at its height. Some were as imprudent as to invest their hard-earned money in new town-sites along the railway line and suffered terrible losses in the catastrophe aftermath of the boom.

Upon their return to Winnipeg in November, 1882, the railroad workers found that those of their group who had stayed behind to work in the city had made little progress. Some of them had been able to extricate themselves from the immigration sheds at the mouth of the Assiniboine River and had secured more suitable dwellings for their families. Those who had managed to accumulate some savings took to peddling or opened small shops. Nevertheless, at the onset of winter more than two dozen immigrant families still remained in the immigration sheds. William Hespeler who had just retired from his post as Dominion immigration agent was importuned by the Dominion government to maintain personal supervision over the remaining shed occupants. He telegraphed the authorities to remove these people to eastern cities so that they might be spared further suffering during the forthcoming winter. His recommendation went unheeded, however, and the people suffered terrible privation during the winter months.

Maintaining its interest in the welfare of the Jewish refugees, the *Free Press* in January, 1883, assigned a reporter to investigate the condition of the group in the immigration shed. The story was headlined "Hebrew Refugees Perishing from Hunger and Cold."³⁶ The sight which the reporter observed on that Jewish Sabbath was one that could cause "all bearing the name of Christians to blush with

³⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, January 8, 1883.

shame." He saw poverty-ridden families "huddled together in various stages of misery in small rooms not large enough for one person to sleep in. A stove, a bench, and in some instances a small table, constituted the sole articles of furniture. The beds were made on tops of boxes which at one time constituted the sole articles of furniture."⁸⁷ But what was most unusual to behold with that miserable setting were "several of the children who were to be seen poring over parts of the Scriptures, written in the Hebrew tongue." Some of the children were in bed while the adults were huddled together for warmth, their scanty clothing offering little protection against the intense cold. It was thirty below zero that Sabbath day. The news story further related that none of the group had complained and it was only "the spectacle of many of the women on the street being poorly clad in calico garments that suggested the probability of there being suffering among them." It was to be marvelled at, opined the writer, that in the desperate straits to which they were reduced not one of them was guilty of an unlawful act, such as stealing wood or any of the necessities of life. The reporter criticized the Dominion government for their neglect of the people who had been brought here with the government's consent. It was lamentable that "much prejudice exists against the Jews, and on that account but few of them have been able to get lasting work." Their distress was beyond full description, concluded the article, and something had to be done most urgently to alleviate their suffering.

An editorial in the same issue urged Winnipeggers to assist the pathetic refugees.⁸⁸ The City Council and many good people responded to the newspaper appeal. At a meeting on January 8, Aldermen McCrossan and McBain brought in a resolution that an allotment of one hundred dollars be made for immediate relief. Several aldermen thought that the Dominion and provincial governments should also assist. At Holy Trinity Church, the rector, Rev. O. Fortin, in his Sunday evening sermon made special reference to the wretched condition of the Jewish refugees in the city. He chastised what appeared to be the callous attitude of the authorities and concluded that "we shall not allow human beings to starve at our very doors."⁸⁹ Several days later a public meeting was convened at the Y.M.C.A. to organize a relief committee. Among those present were leading clergymen and laymen including Professor Bryce, Rev. Isaac Pitblado, Rev. D. M. Gordon, Mr. Dennis, Philip Brown, Louis Wertheim, and Victor Victorson. C. E. Hamilton, an executive of the Manitoba and North-

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 8.

West Railway Company was elected chairman. Philip Brown, speaking on behalf of the Winnipeg Jewish community, reported that the local Jewish residents had raised among themselves over \$1,200. Of that amount \$1,180 had been spent on food and medicine as well as for fares for individual immigrants who went to country points for employment. He went on to say that Sir Alexander T. Galt had made available 500 pounds of the Mansion House funds for the relief of refugees in Winnipeg but that the money had not yet been received. Rev. Gordon asked whether the Jewish immigrant women were willing to serve as domestics and Victorson replied that they were perfectly willing to accept such work. Rev. Pitblado suggested that the new committee call upon Mayor Logan to secure the use of the city immigrant sheds which offered better shelter than the Dominion sheds and Mr. Hamilton, together with Mr. Dennis, undertook this assignment. Appointed as executive members of the Relief Committee were Alderman McCrossan and Victor Victorson who were to act together with the chairman, Mr. Hamilton. Philip Brown offered his premises at 303½ Main Street as a depot for the receipt of contributions of food and clothing.

Spontaneous and wholehearted acts of generosity followed the several appeals. The very day of the Y.M.C.A. meeting, William Murray, proprietor of the Alexander Street Skating Rink, advertised a benefit evening "for the suffering Jews" to be held at his establishment and promised that an Italian band would provide the music. "Come and spend 25 cents for their relief" read the advertisement, "You will never miss it!"⁴⁰ The following day, not to be outdone by his competitor, the proprietor of the Manitoba Skating Rink on Post Office Street advertised another benefit evening when a brass band would be in attendance. A Winnipeg woman, who signed herself as "A Sick Stranger," sent \$1.65 with a letter in which she mentioned that a portion of the amount was subscribed by a servant girl. She concluded with the hope that others might be moved to give as liberally from their wages.⁴¹ One hundred pounds of meat were contributed by D. W. Mills and Co.; Dick Banning gave 600 feet of lumber; one unnamed donor under the pseudonym "A lady friend" contributed two pies. Numerous other individual gentile contributors came with gifts of food, clothing, and money.

Mr. Hamilton with Alderman McCrossan made the rounds among the immigrants, distributing the necessaries to the needy. Blessings were heaped upon the Christian gentlemen and upon the many donors.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, January 9, 1883.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, January 11, 1883.

The City Council offered the Relief Committee an additional two hundred dollars. To aid the destitute Jews, Mark Samuel, Chairman of the Anglo-Jewish Relief Association in Toronto sent \$250 to which he added expressions of thanks to C. E. Hamilton and his co-workers for the deep interest which they had manifested.⁴² From early January, 1883, through mid-February of the same year, unceasing effort was made by Winnipeg citizens to alleviate the misery of the Russian-Jewish immigrants still confined to the sheds on the river bank. The fact that they survived this crucial winter was due in large part to the kindly assistance of the local residents.

VII

Passover, the Jewish "Festival of Freedom," must have had singular significance for Winnipeg Jews in the spring of 1883. Even as it represented the transition from slavery to freedom among the ancient Israelites, it promised a brighter future for local Jewry. The close of winter meant that a renewed effort would be made to establish the newcomers on land either to the west of Winnipeg or in the city proper. With renewed hope the Jewish community made plans for the forthcoming Passover holiday. A hall was secured for the occasion in the second storey of a large block at the corner of Main Street and Logan Street West, above the store of Brown and Coblenz, pioneer Jewish clothiers. It was expected that a hundred and twenty-five men would be in attendance, seventy-five from outside the city, some from as far as several hundred miles away. Appreciative of the extraordinary kindness shown to their compatriots by non-Jewish citizens, the committee-in-charge invited any and all gentiles who might wish to do so to attend the Passover services.⁴³ On Saturday evening, April 21, the "celebration of the great anniversary by the Hebrew people of Winnipeg was reenacted.⁴⁴ Three months later in July, 1883, the exodus of the immigrants from the sheds on the Assiniboine River began. Curiously enough some of the families who resided in the wooden barracks were reluctant to depart from the squalid quarters and only the visit of the city health inspector, together with the fire inspector, impressed upon them the urgency to resettle elsewhere in the city.

⁴²*Ibid.*, February 14, 1883. ⁴³*Ibid.*, April 18, 1883.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, April 23, 1883.

Chapter Four

AGRICULTURAL ATTEMPTS

WHEN THOUSANDS OF JEWS were displaced by the Russian pogroms of 1881 the problem of resettling these people became most urgent. European Jewish leaders in Paris, Berlin, and London hurriedly and earnestly assessed the possible areas in the world to which their unfortunate brethren might be directed. Among the possibilities were the United States, South America, South Africa, Australia, and Canada. But once the question of location was settled there still remained the problem of securing a means of livelihood for these immigrants. American Jewish leaders, in particular, upon observing the arrival of overwhelmingly large numbers of Jews at Ellis Island, wondered whether so large a group could be integrated into the highly industrialized economy of New York City. By way of a solution they decided to direct a part of this immigration into farming on the great American prairies.

Nor was the idea of agricultural resettlement unique to American-Jewish leaders like Jacob Schiff and Michael Heilprin. In Russia, too, strong sentiment favouring farming as a way of life had been current among young Jewish idealists. Some of them organized themselves into the Am Olam (or Eternal People, an organization of young Russian Jews whose primary goal was a return to the soil) and soon after their arrival in America they established agricultural settlements in such distant areas as Louisiana, South Dakota, and Oregon.¹

In Montreal, too, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society was organized in 1863 with the purpose of assisting Jewish immigrants to Canada. The Society's members felt strongly that the newcomers ought to settle on farms in Canada rather than concentrate in the large cities. In January, 1874, it was reported at a meeting of the society that there was "a general movement in progress, in which all the national and charitable societies in the city were to take part, to form a colonization society."² Unfortunately nothing came of this effort.

¹E. Tcherikower, *History of the Jewish Labor Movement In the United States* (2 vols., Yivo, New York, 1945).

²S. Belkin, "Jewish Colonization in Canada," in Arthur D. Hart, *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto and Montreal: Jewish Publications Ltd., 1926), p. 483.

I

The signs of the times were unmistakable. On several continents there was a striking parallel in the plans being developed on behalf of displaced Jews. All such plans converged upon the idea of Jews as farmers who would strike roots in their adopted countries and would no longer be looked upon as aliens. As part of this general plan, the Russian Jewish immigrants of 1882 came to Manitoba with the intention of becoming farmers. Sir Alexander T. Galt had arranged with the Russo-Jewish (Mansion House) Committee in London that the immigrants to Manitoba be granted homesteads in the northwest and that they be assisted financially from funds placed at his disposal by the Committee. Shortly after the immigrants arrived in Winnipeg, Victor Victorson together with several of the immigrant group set out to select land in the vicinity of Qu'Appelle.³ During this period the *Free Press* wrote that in its opinion the Jewish immigrants who wanted the opportunity to go on the land would certainly succeed as farmers. To strengthen its prognostication the paper cited the case of "one man who bought some time ago an entire crop of sixty acres in the vicinity of the Boyne settlement." The man's two sons were in charge of the crop and planned after the harvest "to do breaking for next spring's sowing upon land of their own."⁴ This report of the *Free Press* was in answer to fears expressed by the *Winnipeg Times* that the Jewish immigrants intended to adopt "a communistic system" in their farm enterprise. The *Free Press* answered the *Times* with the reply that "they do not desire to form an isolated group, but rather to mix up with other people, only being poor it is thought that several families should be located near enough together to assist one another, as well as to have friendly assistance."⁵

Apparently Victorson's efforts to find suitable land were unsuccessful. But W. A. Thompson, agent for Sir Alexander Galt, was able to locate land near Moosomin, Northwest Territories. On May 12, 1884, the Jewish colonists, each family supplied with two hundred and fifty dollars' worth of stock and implements, started out by special train from Winnipeg to Moosomin. Louis Wertheim, pioneer Winnipeg resident, was the liaison man between the new settlers and the Winnipeg Jewish community. In an interview three months after their settlement, Wertheim reported favourably on the new farmers' progress. During those first months they had built houses and had put in a sufficient quantity of potatoes and vegetables to last them through

³*Manitoba Free Press*, July 31, 1882.

⁴*Ibid.*, August 11, 1882.

⁵*Ibid.*

the winter. Each of the farmers had broken from ten to twelve acres in preparation for next season's crop and had laid by an abundant supply of hay for their stock.⁶ The future looked promising for New Jerusalem, as the colony came to be known among its settlers.

But the optimism of summer passed quickly with the bitter onslaught of winter. The houses of New Jerusalem were crude and inadequate against the sub-zero weather. Isolation on the snow-covered, wind-blown prairie overwhelmed the settlers with a terrible sense of loneliness. However, with the arrival of spring, their spirits lifted and they set to work ploughing and planting. Although they were not afraid of work, they were fearful of crop failure. Their fears were well founded, for an abnormally early frost hit the region on August 23, 1885, and devasted the crops in a wide area, including New Jerusalem.⁷ The spirits of the group fell very low indeed and now it cost Louis Wertheim great effort to persuade the group to carry on. Wertheim, by now the ardent patron of the colony, wrote to Galt and asked him to persuade the Russo-Jewish Committee that no payment be demanded of the colonists on money advanced until the following year, 1886. Sir Alexander secured the delay of payment, and heartened by Galt's sympathy and by the Committee's generosity, the settlers decided to stay on and try again.

During the winter of 1885–6 life was somewhat less difficult. By now the settlers had a small synagogue and a Hebrew school, as well as a clergyman who served as a teacher and *shochet*.⁸ Strengthened by these necessary and familiar institutions the colonists hoped that some small measure of success would finally be theirs. But in the spring of 1886 they were notified that they would have to meet with Galt's agent, W. A. Thompson, to sign papers committing themselves to payment of interest on the loan made to them by the Russo-Jewish Committee.⁹ The Committee was within its rights demanding the payment already delayed for one year. On the other hand, how were the New Jerusalemites to meet their obligation when they had not yet harvested the 1886 crop? With heavy hearts they signed, hoping for a successful harvest. But to no avail. General drought ruined the crops in the entire area, including 560 acres in New Jerusalem.¹⁰ Two years of hard labour were gone to waste.

⁶*Ibid.*, August 13, 1884.

⁷Arthur S. Morton and Chester Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement and "Dominion Lands" Policy* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 83.

⁸*Shochet*, a ritual slaughterer of game and cattle.

⁹*Moosomin Courier*, May 20, 1886.

¹⁰Morton and Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement*, p. 85.

The colonists were almost completely desititute. Had it not been for occasional gifts of food from the Winnipeg Jewish community, the settlers would have been limited to a diet of oatmeal, potatoes, and small quantities of milk. They began to quarrel among themselves, seeking scapegoats for nature's unkindness to them. Little wonder then that two years after New Jerusalem had been established members began to leave. December, 1886, brought an additional blow to the settlement when the rabbi of the community was caught in a severe blizzard in which his feet were so badly frozen that they required amputation.¹¹ The loss of their rabbi meant that the Hebrew instruction of their children had to be discontinued. Those of the settlers who had children of school age found it necessary to move to the city. And so New Jerusalem which at its outset had numbered 150 people was shrinking steadily.

From 1884 to 1889 New Jerusalem floundered although as late as July, 1889, additional families joined its ranks,¹² and for five years more it was kept alive by the hope that one more year's effort and perhaps still another would yield a good harvest. In September, 1889, a final disaster struck. A fire broke out in the settlement destroying hundreds of tons of hay both in stock and on the fields.¹³ The Jewish colonists were indignant. They charged the police with negligence in delaying its investigation into the cause of the conflagration which they believed to be an act of arson. And now the fire brought the Jewish pioneers to their knees finally and irretrievably. New Jerusalem which had been heralded with great expectations had ended in loss and failure.

The Jewish farmers might have found some slight comfort, had they known that agricultural efforts by other ethnic and religious groups in the Northwest Territories were meeting similar fates. At about the time of the establishment of New Jerusalem the Church Colonization Land Company had set up Christ Church Colony near Qu'Appelle, but this colony did not succeed. The same company established a colony south of Saltcoats in 1888 and it too failed because the English settlers lacked knowledge of the rudiments of agriculture.¹⁴ Jews, Scotsmen, Englishmen, Germans, and Danes were all part of heroic attempts at colonization which met with dismal disappointment. It was clear that there had been need for expert advice in

¹¹*Moosomin Courier*, December 16, 1886.

¹²*Manitoba Free Press*, July 24, 1889.

¹³*Moosomin Courier*, September 25, 1889.

¹⁴Morton and Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement*, p. 87.

farming matters, for extensive general assistance, and above all, the blessings of nature. In the 1880's none of these was forthcoming.

II

In 1887 rumours reached the farmers in the vicinity of Wapella, Northwest Territories, about fifty miles from New Jerusalem, that a second Jewish farm settlement would be established in that region. The newspapers reported that the government had set aside a sizeable area of land for Jewish farmers. Wapella farmers were irate over this information, protesting that "by this action a number of wealthy Englishmen" would be prevented from settling, thus doing the region injury. A petition of protest was taken up among Wapella farmers and sent to the Minister of Interior at Ottawa. Ominous threats were conveyed to the Minister indicating that "unless some action was taken at once it would fare hard with the Jews."¹⁵

But Ottawa authorities were not cowed nor intimidated by the angry representations of the Wapella farmers. Instead, they were receptive to arrangements made jointly by Herman Landau, a prominent Anglo-Jewish financier, and the representative of the Canadian Pacific Railway in London to settle Jewish immigrants on land in the Northwest Territories. Landau looked to Canada as a country where Jewish immigrants could be absorbed in large numbers. Impatient with the slow-moving official machinery of the Russo-Jewish Committee, Landau gave his advice and financial assistance to a small group of Jewish immigrants. By showing that one group of Jewish farmers could succeed, he hoped to induce larger numbers of Jewish settlers to follow them. Herman Landau's faith in this project was borne out. In 1888 a number of Jewish families under the leadership of John Heppner and Abraham Kleiman occupied homesteads in the Wapella district and established what became the oldest surviving Jewish farm colony in western Canada. It was in Wapella that successive groups of immigrants served their apprenticeship in farming.¹⁶ Some of its young people continued in the field of agriculture and some studied agriculture at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, then entering academic and research work.

¹⁵*Manitoba Free Press*, April 26, 1887.

¹⁶Louis Rosenberg, "Jews in Agriculture in Western Canada," in H. E. Wilder, ed., *The One Hundredth Anniversary Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Daily Press, 1932), p. 54. Information was also received from Max Heppner, one-time representative of Baron de Hirsch Institute.

In 1887 several national groups in Winnipeg joined in organizing the National Societies' Immigration Committee. This co-ordinating body set itself the task of demanding that more extensive attention be given to immigration matters by Dominion and provincial authorities.¹⁷ Louis Vineberg, active in both Jewish and general affairs in the Winnipeg community, was one of the Committee's organizers and became its first chairman. In that capacity he corresponded with the Anglo-Jewish Committee with which Herman Landau was identified. Through this contact Landau began to form some idea of Manitoba's immigration possibilities. Landau had other important connections with Canada; he knew Alexander T. Galt, Canada's High Commissioner in London, and had worked closely with C.P.R. officials on the Wapella project. Through these contacts he must have been apprised of Manitoba's good farming potentialities. It was to Canada's northwest, then, that Landau would have sent Jewish immigrants seeking a haven and a home.

In these years, too, Baron de Hirsch's interest in agricultural colonization was already well known. It was known, too, that he was on the threshold of an enterprise which would place thousands of Jews on the land of some underdeveloped country in the western hemisphere. Landau, convinced that western Canada would be the ideal place for such large-scale settlement, urged his proposals upon influential circles at every opportunity.

In 1887 de Hirsch lost his son, an only child, and Herman Landau came to Paris to offer his personal sympathies to the Baron and his wife. It was then that he suggested that de Hirsch and his wife "adopt all Israel as their children" and form for them colonies in Canada. A short time after this meeting Landau received correspondence from the Baron in which he asked Landau for fuller details concerning the Canadian settlement project. The Baron also asked him to recommend a reliable Jewish organization which could implement this enterprise. Landau replied recommending the Anglo-Jewish Association. But before Landau could continue his explorations with Baron de Hirsch, Murietta and Company, a banking firm in which de Hirsch held a large interest, suffered bankruptcy, leaving the Baron with heavy holdings in Argentine land bonds. For the time being at least, he was perforce tied to an Argentine settlement.¹⁸

¹⁷*Manitoba Free Press*, May 3, 1887.

¹⁸Report on lecture by Herman Landau in the *Jewish Chronicle* (London, England), January 19, 1906.

Still he did not lose interest in Herman Landau's proposals concerning Jewish settlement in Canada, and in 1890 a report came from Paris that Baron de Hirsch was about to establish a colony in the northwest. He was "negotiating with the Canadian government respecting the proposed Jewish settlement."¹⁹ Having learned of Baron de Hirsch's renewed interest in the possibility of a Canadian settlement and encouraged by his grant of \$120,000 to benevolent societies in the United States, leaders of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society in Montreal began correspondence with Baron de Hirsch to request similar assistance for the Montreal Society whose funds were very meagre. Through the efforts of its president, Harris Vineberg, and of Moise Schwab, French vice-consul in Montreal, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society succeeded in obtaining a grant of \$20,000.²⁰

With this basic fund a building was purchased in December, 1890, and named the Baron de Hirsch Institute in honour of its benefactor. The Institute provided a home for the constant stream of newcomers from Europe, as well as a free school for their children. A colonization committee was appointed to carry on serious negotiations for Jewish colonization in Canada.

While interest in Jewish farm immigrants was growing in Montreal, Thomas Greenway, Premier of Manitoba, visited England in December, 1890. One of the purposes of his visit was to encourage European farmers to migrate to his underpopulated province. Upon his return, Greenway expressed optimism over the immigration potential in Europe, including possible Jewish immigrants.²¹ Shortly after Greenway's return to Winnipeg newspapers reported that Baron de Hirsch was "arranging to send two or three thousand Jews of the agricultural class to Manitoba to settle on farms."²² Professor Goldwin Smith, a virulently anti-Jewish academician of Toronto, was alarmed at Premier Greenway's hospitality to Jewish immigrants. He wrote a lengthy letter to the *Manitoba Free Press* in which he roundly criticized the Manitoba premier.

It seems that you are taking in a number of hapless Jews who are being driven out by the European population. These people, besides their want of agricultural aptitude, are as a rule, not producers of native labor. It is

¹⁹*Manitoba Free Press*, January 17, 1890.

²⁰Sir Charles Tupper, later Premier of Canada, served as High Commissioner from 1883 to 1896, having succeeded Sir Alexander T. Galt.

²¹*Manitoba Free Press*, December 23, 1890.

²²*Ibid.*, January 20, 1891.

on this account and from hatred of their financial practices, not on account of their religion, that the people of Europe, and especially the peasantry, be rising against them.²³

Professor Smith was opposed in general to all European immigration and urged that Manitoba should welcome instead "the floating agricultural populations of this continent, American and Canadian." For all his erudition the Toronto professor had a very limited understanding of Canada's absorption capacity. In contrast with the strident and bigoted note injected by Goldwin Smith, the Baron de Hirsch Institute of Montreal received an encouraging message from John J. Stemshorn, Dominion immigration agent, in Regina, Northwest Territories. Stemshorn wrote:

I notice by the papers that you are contemplating settling Jews in the North-West Territory. I take the liberty to inform you that the Russians already in the Regina district are all doing well, and that we have still a large quantity of homestead land within a radius of ten miles from Regina. Any information you may desire will be cheerfully given.²⁴

In 1891 the Russian outrages against Jews reached new momentum. Russia's anti-Semitic convulsions raged on unabated and thousands upon thousands of Jews continued to pour across its borders, great streams of distraught humanity who needed a quiet place on earth on which to set their feet.

Baron de Hirsch responded to this critical need by establishing the Jewish Colonization Association to which he granted an initial amount of 2,000,000 francs which he later increased to a capital of 10,000,000 francs. According to the Association's Charter, its foremost task was:

To assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any parts of Europe or Asia, and principally from countries in which they may for the time being be subjected to any special taxes or other disabilities, to any other parts of the world and to form and establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries for agricultural, commercial or other purposes.²⁵

In the meantime Ottawa authorities, eager for investments in Canada by the Jewish Colonization Association, had exchanged correspondence on this matter with Sir Charles Tupper, High Commissioner in London. Sir Charles had, in turn, been in touch with leading English Jews and indirectly with Baron de Hirsch regarding an exten-

²³*Ibid.*, January 24, 1891.

²⁴Archives and Correspondence of Baron de Hirsch Institut, Montreal. Letter dated January 15, 1891.

²⁵S. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1935).

sive settlement of Jews in Canada. Montreal Jewish leaders, too, were behind these efforts to bring Baron de Hirsch closer to undertaking to finance a Jewish agricultural settlement in Canada. On December 28, 1891, Sir Hugh Sutherland, secretary to Sir Charles Tupper, wrote to the President of the Baron de Hirsch Institute of Montreal:

I have learned in a most confidential way that some serious difficulties have arisen in the Baron's negotiations with the Argentine Republic and an agent whom I know very well was despatched last week to close up and retire from the Argentine, unless the Government recede from the stand they have recently assumed in regard to Jewish colonization.

Sutherland went on to write that this was the opportune time to propose Manitoba as an excellent settlement area. He write that he was "using my endeavours to get the Baron to throw his weight in the direction of Manitoba and have blocked out a scheme which attracted his eye and the confidence of his agent."²⁶ In conclusion Sutherland suggested that the Baron be sent complete reports concerning Manitoban crops and that if at all possible official correspondence be initiated between the Manitoba government and de Hirsch.

Concomitant with this development Jewish leaders in Montreal requested an interview with Prime Minister John C. Abbott. On January 12, 1892, representatives of the Baron de Hirsch Institute met with the Canadian Prime Minister and the Ministers of Agriculture and the Interior to discuss the possibility of colonization in Manitoba. It was the first time that a group of Jewish leaders had met with a Canadian prime minister on an official mission, and it was a most cordial encounter. The Jewish delegates were satisfied that the Canadian government would do its utmost to further the colonizing effort. Following the meeting the Institute officials submitted to Prime Minister Abbott a detailed fourteen-point memorandum in which they posed basic questions relating to the Manitoba proposal. In particular they asked if land could be found upon which to establish 2,000 families or 10,000 persons. To this question the Prime Minister replied that there were "several points in Manitoba and the North-West Territories where desirable land could be found, upon which such a colony could be established, but there are three main points within easy reach of railway communications to which special attention may be called, namely, the Prince Albert, Red Deer and Edmonton districts."²⁷

²⁶Archives of the Baron de Hirsch Institute, Montreal. Letter dated December 28, 1891, quoted in Benjamin B. Sack, "An Historical Opportunity Forfeited," *Canadian Jewish Yearbook* (1941).

²⁷Archives of the Baron de Hirsch Institute, Memorandum to Prime Minister Abbott, January 16, 1892; Abbott's reply, February 15, 1892.

The reply further stated that the Government found it sound policy to have the land selected by the settlers themselves or their accredited agents. It suggested that the Institute appoint a competent person to explore the regions mentioned, following which a meeting could be convened between such a representative and the officers of the Departments of the Interior and of Agriculture. Thus a sensible decision could be arrived at by the mutually interested parties.

III

While negotiations continued, Russian-Jewish immigrants were on the move. Driven out from Russia, they could not wait for organizational and governmental fiats to pave the way for them. In the late summer and early fall of 1891 groups of Russian Jews arrived in Winnipeg, many of them expecting to settle on the land as farmers. The crops were not yet harvested and so Winnipeg Jewish leaders who had excellent relations with the Mennonite farmers were able to find employment for them on farms in the Gretna and Plum Coulee districts. The Russian Jews took to farm work willingly and looked to the future with some optimism.²⁸

Among these arrivals from Montreal was Asher Pierce, who, impatient with the negotiations of the Montreal Jewish leaders, sought out land for himself, for his father Jacob Pierce, and for his brothers at Oxbow in southeastern Assiniboia (later Saskatchewan). The Pierce family were followed in 1892 by forty-seven more Jewish families who took up homesteads in the Oxbow region, not far from the western border of Manitoba.

In March, 1892, the chairman of the Colonization Committee in Montreal, David A. Ansell, received the long-awaited news from Dr. Sigmund Sonnenfeld that the Jewish Colonization Association of Baron de Hirsch placed at the disposal of the Montreal organization one hundred thousand francs. The Colonization Committee immediately appointed Charles McDiarmid and I. Roth to explore land which had been recommended by the Department of Agriculture in the vicinities of Red Deer, Prince Albert, and Regina. The men were also instructed to visit the Moosomin farm site.

In late March, 1892, McDiarmid and Roth surveyed the various sites and ruled out the Moosomin area immediately. The buildings constructed by the earlier settlers were in ruins and the nearest railroad station was twenty-five miles off. Instead their first choice was

²⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, September 23, 1891.

land in the vicinity of Regina. But opposition to the Regina region was raised in two quarters. The gentile farmers of the area raised a cry against the Jewish settlers; and Asher Pierce of the Oxbow colony insisted that Oxbow was the better site because a Jewish farm colony already existed there. The *Regina Leader* said that "the Regina district is not a desirable place to make a dumping ground for Russia's pauper element."²⁹ The Regina Board of Trade went so far as to register an official protest with Nicholas Flood Davin, the Regina member of Parliament, and with the Minister of the Interior at Ottawa. Passing through Winnipeg on their return to Montreal, McDiarmid and Roth denied the Regina charge of pauperism among the incoming Jewish settlers. "These refugees" said the Montreal investigators, "are not paupers, but strong and willing laboring men, supplied with sufficient money to get along well."³⁰

The animosity of the Reginans and the earnest solicitations of Asher Pierce had the desired results. After careful discussions with the Colonization Committee, on the return of McDiarmid and Roth to Montreal, the Oxbow district was selected as the point of settlement. The Dominion Land Commissioner at Winnipeg, H. H. Smith, was requested officially by the Montreal Committee to hold land in the Oxbow region and was informed that entries for the homesteads would shortly be made by the settlers when they would pass through Winnipeg.

Charles McDiarmid was appointed manager of the new colony and soon after his discussions with the Montreal Committee he returned west to lay plans for the newcomers. On May 1, 1892, a group of seventy-two men arrived in Winnipeg and were jubilantly welcomed at the C.P.R. depot by Jewish residents. They were joined by nineteen men who had spent the previous winter in Winnipeg and all departed together for Oxbow. Their wives and children were to follow them as soon as they had built shelters. On the evening of May 2, 1892, ninety-one heads of families detrained at Oxbow and founded the Hirsch colony, named after the magnanimous baron.³¹

In August, 1892, Moses Vineberg and D. S. Friedman, members of the Baron de Hirsch Institute of Montreal, paid an official visit to the Hirsch colony and were favourably impressed by the progress made in the short period of three months. The colony had grown to two hundred residents and it was expected that within a short period it

²⁹*Ibid.*, March 23, 1892, quoting the (*Regina*) *Leader*.

³⁰*Ibid.*, March 24, 1892.

³¹*Ibid.*, May 2, 1892.

would reach a population of three hundred and fifty. Each man had taken possession of one hundred and sixty acres and had planted oats, potatoes, and vegetables. About eight hundred tons of hay lay in the fields ready to be cut. Water was somewhat scarce but digging was being done and it was hoped that the shortage would soon be alleviated. Relationships with the gentile farmers were reported to be good. In talking to the neighbouring farmers Vineberg and Friedman were told that the Jewish settlers were "good workers and perfectly honest and reliable." The best testimony to the success of the Hirsch colony was the statement of one settler who had said to Vineberg and Friedman, "Look, I am as happy as a king; every acre I took is my own land. There is not a drunkard in the whole colony, or one who lives an evil life."³²

To attend to their religious needs the colonists engaged a clergyman and built a synagogue. In a short while they built two schools to serve the educational needs of their children.³³ The Jewish Colonization Society in Paris sent in 1893 and 1894 a total of \$40,000 to cover the financial needs of the colony. The Hirsch settlement was off to an auspicious start. But the early years brought drought, hail, grasshoppers, and other severe setbacks. In 1897 the Hirsch colonists who had survived the five lean years were blessed with their first healthy and abundant wheat crop. Professor H. L. Sabsovich, superintendent of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School in New Jersey, visited the Hirsch settlement in the summer of 1897, and reported that its wheat was graded as Number One and would bring seventy-four cents a bushel. Some of the settlers who had despaired of ever earning a livelihood at Hirsch and had gone to Winnipeg were encouraged to return by the successful crop of 1897. New settlers were attracted to the colony and Hirsch was on its way to stability. It became a leading Jewish farm settlement for three decades and set the pattern for several others established at the turn of the century. These included Lipton, Cupar, Edenbridge, and Sonnenfeld in Saskatchewan and Rumsey in Alberta.

IV

What became of the grand scheme to settle several thousand Jewish farmers in Manitoba? Why had nothing come of proposals supported by the combined strength of government circles in Ottawa, or Jewish

³²*Ibid.*, August 10, 1892.

³³Among those who taught in the Hirsch schools was the Hon. James G. Gardiner, later Minister of Agriculture in the St. Laurent cabinet.

leaders in Montreal, and of the High Commissioner's staff in London? Even as late as 1897, when Sir Wilfrid Laurier came to London to participate in Queen Victoria's Jubilee Celebration, he discussed this unfulfilled project with Herman Landau. He told Landau, "If you will take up this question seriously and select any part of Manitoba the Dominion will grant the Jews a measure of self-government as will enable them to make their own by-law, substituting Saturday for Sunday."³⁴

Very little came of these splendid visions. No historian has, as yet, suggested clearly why they did not come to their logical fulfilment but clues point to a fortuitous lack of synchronization among the major forces involved. By sheer accident Baron de Hirsch came to invest the bulk of his colonization funds in Argentine rather than in Canada. By the time the funds were sent in March of 1892 the first group of immigrants had already been in Oxbow, Assiniboia, for six months. It was to Assiniboia (Saskatchewan) that later immigrants, sponsored by the Jewish Colonization Association, came to settle. When the need was most urgent leaders of the Baron de Hirsch Institute were still groping. As an organization they were immature; they had not the daring to act quickly in the face of emergency. The Canadian government, for many years ready and willing to welcome investments and immigrants, waited in vain for the large numbers which had been promised to populate the empty miles of the Manitoba prairies.

In 1903 a Jewish colony did come into being in the Interlake district of Manitoba, about seventy-two miles north of Winnipeg. Some thirty Russian-Jewish families who had resided in Winnipeg for several years were organized by Jacob Bender and took up homesteads in that region. The colony, which was originally named Bender Hamlet and later renamed Narcisse³⁵ was modelled after the European plan of a village colony. Each of the settlers received a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres and one hundred and sixty acres were set aside for a village settlement. The village was divided into twenty lots of eight acres each on which the settlers built their homes and farm buildings. It was expected that a village plan would alleviate the tedium and loneliness of farm life.

However, distances as great as five miles from home to farm created the problem of travel back and forth several times a day. In some instances neighbours in the village were uncongenial and unpleasant-

³⁴Benjamin G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945).

³⁵In honour of Narcisse Leven, one-time president of the Jewish Colonization Association.

ness arose. The land, too, was ill-chosen, much of the area being rocky, swampy, and unsuited to farming. Narcisse lasted into the late twenties but was given its final blow when, after World War I, cattle prices fell severely, with the result that a major source of livelihood for the Jewish settlers was undermined. Ukrainian and Scandinavian farmers of the region also left the area for similar reasons. At its height Narcisse had a population of thirty-eight Jewish families, a synagogue, and a public school. Reverend Dixon served the community as its spiritual leader for many years. Today only the Jewish cemetery remains at Narcisse.

In 1911 another group of Jewish farmers from Russia took up homesteads at Camper, Manitoba, also in the Interlake district. New Hirsch was the name given to the colony. These farmers devoted themselves to cattle-raising and dairy-farming and the colony flourished for a number of years but like Narcisse it suffered severely when cattle prices dropped after World War I. And so New Hirsch, too, was forced to dissolve in 1924.

The Jewish farmers in Manitoba who were the most successful for the longest period of time were those who settled near Winnipeg. Such farmers were able to give their children a Jewish education and to join their city friends during the major festivals and holy days. Two farm settlements near Winnipeg, Bird's Hill and West Kildonan, were large enough to build their own synagogues. Others, like St. Anne, Gimli, Lorette, Transcona, Rosenfeld, and Rosser, though smaller Jewish settlements were close enough to Winnipeg to be spared the privations brought on by distance and isolation. For more than two decades they succeeded in dairy-farming, poultry-raising, and truck-farming but they could not withstand the economic ravages of the depression. In most cases, too, there was no family continuity; few children were ready to remain farmers. The blandishments of the city helped finish what the depression had begun. By 1931 there were only one hundred and thirty-one Jewish farmers in Manitoba, and there has been a steady decrease in this number ever since.

Chapter Five

COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AND THE PROFESSIONS

THE CHARACTER of the Manitoba to which Jews began to come during the last three decades of the nineteenth century was slowly being transformed. Aided by a great influx of farmer-settlers from Iceland, Russia, the Ukraine, and neighbouring Province of Ontario and spurred on by the double promise of a transcontinental railway to link Manitoba with the east and of branch-lines to reach from the isolated farmlands of Manitoba to the main distribution centre of the province, Manitoba began to change from a fur-trade economy into an agricultural economy. In the wake of the railroad's completion in 1886 the agricultural development of western Canada was rapid. Winnipeg became a distribution and transportation centre, "the funnel through which all the products of eastern Canada passed on their way to western consumers."¹ Millions of bushels of grain, until now held back from natural markets because of the lack of railroad connection, began to move into the ready markets of eastern Canada and western Europe.

The people who grew the grain were helping to change the face of the province, not only economically but also ethnically. With the arrival of the Mennonites and the Icelanders in the 1870's and the Ukrainians in the 1890's, Manitoba became the geographic repository of several ethnic groups which differed considerably in matters of faith, culture, and language. Until now the lingual and ethnic balance had been a matter of great concern for the English, Scottish, and French settlers, but by the last decade of the nineteenth century a variegated ethnic and multilingual pattern had been established with positive economic results, and the race for ethnic leadership was relaxed if not entirely abandoned.

Into this dynamic economic cauldron came the Jews. Farmers they were not as were the Icelanders, Mennonites, and Ukrainians but they brought their own psychological and economic skills. For centuries the middlemen in whatever country they had resided, they now came

¹Louis Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community of Winnipeg* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1946).

to serve propitiously again as small merchants, artisans, and pedlars among the far-flung settlements of a vast and underpopulated land.

Peddling was, perhaps, the least complex of endeavours for men without resources. A new immigrant could begin with a modest investment and could gradually build up a "pack-on-back" enterprise. In Manitoba Jewish pedlars had an advantage in that there were farmers in the countryside whose languages were familiar to them. They were able to deal freely with the Mennonites because Yiddish, their mother-tongue, and the Mennonite Platt-Deutsch had in common a cognate language, German. Jews who came from Ukraine easily established contact with Ukrainian farmers.

In time many Jewish pedlars, tired by the rigours of their wandering existence, used their modest savings to open general stores at strategic country crossroads. As country merchants they were more than mere storekeepers. They served as interpreters, counsellors, and trusted friends and their stores became informal gathering places—stitutions of friendship. These associations led to rich, mutual loyalties between storekeeper and customer. It is not surprising to read in an 1889 news report from Morden that all of that town's residents turned out *en masse* to fête Jacob Heiman and his wife at the local Odd Fellow's Hall on the occasion of their wedding anniversary.² When D. Rabinovich, the owner of a general store in Morden, suffered a disastrous fire in 1897 which destroyed his establishment completely, the town residents voluntarily collected a sum of money to help him re-establish his business. He paid back the generous people of Morden over the next few years.³ When one remembers the tragic, hate-filled encounters between Ukrainians and Jews in Russia the knowledge that in Manitoba they enjoyed warm and friendly relations is both a fascinating and an encouraging observation on the efficacy of freedom in a democratic land.

At one time Jewish country merchants could be found in at least one hundred and eighteen towns and villages of Manitoba where they spent from ten to twenty years. As their children grew older, however, and the problems of Jewish education and marriage became of immediate concern to them, many sold their businesses, lucrative though they might have been. Some postponed their departure from the country by sending their children to the boarding school at Winnipeg's Jewish Orphanage. Others brought young men from Europe to help

²*Manitoba Free Press*, October 16, 1889.

³The list of Morden contributors to the Rabinovich Fund is to be found in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. A popular pedlar whose name was given to a Manitoba town is mentioned in "Manitoba Place Names," the town named Shilo.

in the store and to teach the children of the household in the after-school hours. But sooner or later, almost all the Jewish merchants in rural Manitoba finally came to live in Winnipeg, the centre of Jewish cultural and religious life in the province.

The role and the function of the Jewish country merchant diminished with time. Second-generation Ukrainians and Mennonites were beginning to enter the mercantile field in the rural areas, offering considerable competition to the Jewish storekeepers. Moreover, as roads improved on the prairie and as the automobile began to replace the horse and buggy, the cities became more readily accessible and the country merchant's position was severely undermined. By the mid-1930's the Jewish merchant in rural Manitoba was ceasing to be a factor in the commercial life of the villages in which he had served during the pioneering stage of their development. In the larger cities of the province, in Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Dauphin, The Pas, and Flin Flon, Jews have integrated successfully and continue to contribute to the economic life of their communities.

In Winnipeg, the earliest Jewish business neighbourhood consisted of small shops centred around the C.P.R. depot. They were fragile, frame structures grouped in a chain along Main Street, from Higgins Avenue to James Street. In most instances the families of merchants resided at the back of or above the small stores. As some of them succeeded in business they acquired dwellings behind Main Street on Martha Street. A minority who prospered bought homes in residential areas on Lilly and adjacent streets.

The *Henderson Directory* of 1882-3 reveals that there was a variety of Jewish-owned establishments in the C.P.R. neighbourhood which dealt in cigars, dry goods, jewellery, men's clothes, confectionery, furs, groceries, and baked goods. There were also tailor shops and second-hand clothing stores. These small shops opened by pioneer Jewish settlers were enlarged by their sons and grandsons and developed into large haberdasheries, shoe stores, fur shops, and small department stores which today enhance the two major business thoroughfares—Main Street and Portage Avenue.

In another area of the city, to the north of the C.P.R. tracks, there settled Jewish labourers, carpenters, scrap collectors, draymen, rag peddlers, painters, and milkmen, their numbers steadily augmented by small waves of immigrants until World War I. These Jewish residents were concentrated around Sutherland Avenue, west of Main Street stretching across to Salter Street, as far north as Selkirk Avenue and then east to the Red River. In reporting on this slum area, the Winni-

peg newspapers referred to it as "Jerusalem," because of its heavy Jewish population but a much more correct designation was that applied to it by the Jewish residents themselves—*Mitzrayim*, the Hebrew for Egypt, a name it well deserved. The struggling human beings with which *Mitzrayim* teemed drudged like serfs in the service of a harsh master—physical survival. But the spirit of these people was not broken. Responding to dreams of a better life they worked ambitiously to lift themselves out of their endless toil and to succeed in their small workaday worlds. Among these dreamers and strivers were the pioneers in a number of the commercial and industrial efforts which helped put Manitoba on the map as a province noted not only for its agricultural attainments but also for its business enterprise.

The first Jews to make their individual contribution to Manitoba's industrial economy were "Jerusalem" tailors. They laid the foundation, a few as employers, the larger number as workers, in the factories which began to produce women's coats and suits, children's wear, work clothing and overalls, men's clothing, pants and sportswear, shirts, furs, hats and caps, and gloves and knit goods. Years later (1956) the value of these products came to an annual sales volume of fifty million dollars and made possible the employment of at least six thousand workers with an annual payroll of thirteen million dollars.⁴

In 1899 Moses Haid opened the Winnipeg Shirt and Overall Company. Haid was an energetic and far-seeing young man who saw the possibilities of a clothing manufacturing centre in Winnipeg which could break and even supersede the monopoly held in western Canada by eastern producers. Beginning modestly in one room with a staff consisting of himself, his wife, and a Mr. Geller his establishment grew into a substantial business in less than a decade. In 1906 Haid was joined by Harry Steinberg who had been a merchant in Manitou, Manitoba, for several years. Together, the partners forged ahead in their reorganized firm now named the Western Shirt and Overall Company. They frequently visited eastern Canada and the United States to observe the latest methods employed in their industry and returned with advanced methods of production which they introduced into their Winnipeg plant. Attracted by their success others soon followed them into this field. An abundance of cheap electric power and a growing market for work clothes favoured the industry which grew prodigiously until today Manitoba leads all of Canada in the

⁴I am indebted to Henry H. Guttman, Executive Director of the Garment Manufacturers Association of Western Canada, for these facts and figures.

production of work shirts and is second to Toronto in the production of wind breakers and work pants.⁵ In this branch of the garment industry as in all others in Manitoba, Jews have been pioneers and leaders.

Two partners, Ben Jacob, a Jew, and John Crowley, a non-Jew, were the pioneers in the manufacture of ladies' apparel. In 1914 Jacob and Crowley opened a women's coat and suit factory and were followed soon after by another firm in this field, the Goldberg Brothers. When the industry was in its infancy "all the mills, all the skilled labor, all the experience and the know-how were located in the East."⁶ Before very long, however, both of these firms were able to compete favourably with eastern Canada. Efficient and economical methods of production made it possible for these manufacturers to absorb the freight charges for raw materials and supplies. The ladies' apparel industry began to develop after World War I and was given particular impetus during World War II when the fulfilment of government war contracts necessitated expansion. After the war the industry converted successfully to meet civilian needs and began to produce new garments and accessories for women. Today nearly every type of women's garments is produced in Manitoba.

Beginning with the war effort in 1939 the garment industry in Manitoba has grown remarkably. The Manitoba Department of Industry and Commerce reported that between 1941 and 1952 there had been an increase of 213 per cent in the gross value of production in the garment industry. The number of plants had increased by almost 40 per cent and the number of employees by approximately 49 per cent. The growth of the garment industry has been unmatched and has surpassed the development of the top five manufacturing industries during these years.⁷

Long before it was incorporated as the City of Winnipeg, Fort Garry was an important centre of the fur trade and almost all of its early settlers were engaged in the fur business in one way or another. For decades the economic development of the city hinged on the plentiful supply and sale of furs in Winnipeg. In those years skins were sent to wholesale dry goods and grocery firms by customers who traded with trappers in the outlying posts of the prairie provinces. It was a simple operation. Skins passed from trappers to traders to wholesalers

⁵H. H. Guttman, "Garment Trade is Big Business," *Actimist* (Winnipeg, March, 1952). In co-operation with the Manitoba Department of Industry and Commerce.
⁶Ibid.

⁷William Lazer, "Marketing Management in Manitoba's Garment Industry," *Western Garment Industry and Wholesalers Review* (1957).

who sold them by sealed tenders and bids to fur dealers in the city. Among the early fur dealers were R. J. Robinson, Moses Finkelstein, Moses Cohen, Benjamin Z. Levinson, and Otto Silverman.

For many years furs were shipped from the wholesale houses of Manitoba to St. Louis, Missouri, which was a centre for the international fur auctions. In 1919 the St. Louis auction houses suffered bankruptcy and the flow of furs was brought to a standstill. Manitoba fur dealers now realized that if their furs were to be moved expeditiously from the trappers in the hinterland to the large markets they, the dealers, would have to create their own auction-sale machinery in Winnipeg. A growing fur-manufacturing industry in Winnipeg led to the establishment of the Winnipeg Fur Auctions in 1921 by a group of Jewish businessmen headed by Hyman Yewdall. In 1929, George Soudack, who had started his career as a trapper, opened the Soudack Fur Auctions. The volume of fur sales for export grew steadily, reaching a figure of twelve million dollars in 1952. The furs which were exported were mink, ermine, squirrel, muskrat, and beaver.⁸

Since the city was located at the heart of one of the world's largest fur-yielding areas, it was natural that a fur-manufacturing industry should develop in Winnipeg. However, the growth of such an industry was contingent upon the availability of expert fur dressers and dyers. In 1912, Elias Reich, a taxidermist by training, arrived in Winnipeg from New York City and set up a small fur factory in Elmwood. In 1914, he brought J. H. Hecht from New York to be his designer and factory supervisor. A year earlier two Jewish craftsmen had established the fur-dyeing and dressing firm of Berwin and Bliss. They were the first to possess the skills essential to expert fur manufacture. Henceforth local manufacturers were not dependent upon eastern furriers for processing and, as a result, the fur business slowly developed into a thriving industry. Reich and Hecht called upon the skills of Berwin and Bliss and began to produce fur coats, muffs, and scarves which found ready markets in all of western Canada. Others followed these men into the fur-manufacturing field and helped to develop an industry which totalled seventy-five factories. Among the largest are Stall Fur Company and Neaman Fur Company. Fur production in 1951-2 was valued at over five million dollars.

The trade in livestock was a field which early attracted the interest of Jews who undertook to supply the kosher meat needs of the Winnipeg community. S. Narvolansky began purchasing livestock from

⁸H. J. Hansell, "Furs—Manitoba's First Industry," *Winnipeg Tribune* (May 28, 1952).

prairie farmers in 1894, and in 1896 David Balcovske and Moses Finkelstein began to operate a cattle ranch south of Medicine Hat and developed a sizable enterprise. At the turn of the century

	Males		Females	
	1931	1941	1931	1941
<i>Trade</i>	1,947	2,002	304	336
Retail	850	794	45	55
Wholesale	311	427	2	1
Travellers	54	171	—	—
Pedlars	203	129	—	—
Sales persons	412	335	224	249
<i>Manufacturing</i>	972	1,227	510	502
Owners and managers	164	193	2	2
Foremen	7	23	5	6
Furriers	128	165	47	31
Printers	40	53	—	1
Shoe repairers	40	23	—	—
Tailors	205	146	3	11
Upholsterers	33	26	6	—
Textiles products	85	213	352	367
Food products	16	26	15	4
Leather products	24	30	20	18
<i>Construction</i>	343	306	—	—
Carpenters	80	57	—	—
Electricians	49	53	—	—
Painters	100	89	—	—
Plumbers	18	29	—	—
Metal workers	52	53	—	—
<i>Transportation</i>	258	279	3	4
Bus and taxi drivers	24	20	—	—
Teamsters	55	45	—	—
Truck drivers	72	141	—	—
<i>Recreational Service</i>	40	77	6	11
Projectionists	12	17	—	—
<i>Finance</i>	13	16	—	—
Insurance agents	50	54	—	1
Real estate agents	19	15	—	1
<i>Personal Service</i>	109	112	127	74
Hotel owners	6	6	—	3
Restaurateurs	11	20	2	19
Barbers	41	37	11	—
Cleaning and laundry	61	46	15	10
<i>Clerical</i>	298	394	438	510
Accountants and auditors	15	50	1	3
Bookkeepers	102	74	81	94
Office clerks	114	147	32	91
Shipping clerks	58	114	7	8
Stenographers and typists	9	9	344	313
<i>Unskilled Labourers</i>	255	99	19	16

Abraham Berg, David Finn, A. I. Slotin, and Hyman Harris established meat-packing businesses in Winnipeg and were supplied by independent Jewish cattle dealers whose numbers grew steadily over the years, reaching several hundred by the mid-1940's. Of Manitoba's eleven meat-packing firms three are owned by Jewish businessmen: the Public Abbatoir, St. Boniface Abbatoir, and the Farmer's Abbatoir. Active on Winnipeg's Livestock Exchange Board were A. I. Slotin and Elia Trepel, one-time presidents, and Harry Fainstein, a vice-president.

Winnipeg's significant position as a grain-trading centre attracted a number of Jews to this branch of Manitoba's economy. Of the four major flour mills in Winnipeg two, Soo Line Mills and St. Boniface Grain, are owned by Jewish dealers. A number of Jews have held seats on Winnipeg's grain exchange, among them the Cohen Brothers, John Sternberg, Julius Adler, Sam Abrams, Emanuel Ripstein, Reginald Ripstein, Charles O. Swartz, Max Nussgart, Hy Nussgart, Sol Kanee, Joseph Dreman, W. B. Malchy, Garson Vogel, and Charles Kroft. Kroft was the first Jewish member to serve as President of Winnipeg's grain exchange. Among international grain brokerages represented in Winnipeg are two Jewish firms, Dreyfus and Company and the Bunge Corporation.

According to studies by Louis Rosenberg, an outstanding Canadian Jewish demographer and statistician, the largest occupational group among Winnipeg Jews is engaged in trade, followed, in turn, by those in the manufacturing industries, clerical occupations, and the professions. Their distribution throughout the various occupations is given in the preceding table. Rosenberg's study further reveals a remarkable increase in the Jewish professional ranks during the last three decades. A comparison table indicates the following:

	1931	1941	1956
Physicians	43	62	102
Dentists	16	23	56
Lawyers	46	62	93
Architects	2	3	10

Undoubtedly the unusual increase of Jewish physicians is due to the fair admissions policy at the University of Manitoba Medical School, in effect now for more than a decade, as well as the liberal policies that prevail on the medical staffs of Winnipeg's hospitals. There has been an increase, too, of Jewish faculty members in recent years. In

1954 there were fifteen Jewish professors in the various faculties of the University.

Manitoba Jewish men and women who have achieved renown in the province and beyond its borders in a variety of fields are here listed:

Academics

Simon Abrahamson, First Jewish Rhodes Scholar, lawyer
Ruben C. Bellan, Associate Professor, University of Manitoba
Norman Cantor, Rhodes Scholar, Professor, Princeton University
Maxwell Cohen, Professor of International Law, McGill University
Mr. Justice Samuel Freedman, Chancellor, University of Manitoba
Allan Gotlieb, Rhodes Scholar, Oxford University
Sol Sinclair, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of Manitoba
Harry S. Stein, Professor of Education, University of British Columbia

Authors

Jack Ludwick, Professor of English and novelist
Bernard Ostry, Professor of History and biographer
Adele Wiseman, Novelist

Chess

Abe Yanofsky, International competitions

Entertainment

Belva Boroditsky, Opera
Wolf Cohen, Executive, Warner Brothers
Alvin Goldman, Film producer
Monte Hall, T.V. performer
Freda Trepel Kaufman, Pianist
Paul Kligman, Radio, T.V., and stage
Morley Meredith, Singer
Libby Morris, T.V. and stage comedienne
Zara Nelsova, Cellist
Morton Parker, Film producer
Bert Pearl, Radio and stage
Leonard Pearlman, Conductor
Lou Rusoff, Film writer and producer
Shirley Trepel Senofsky, Cellist
Paddy Stone, Dancer

Finance

Samuel Bronfman, Distilleries magnate, philanthropist

Government

Mr. Justice Samuel Freedman, Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench
David Golden, Rhodes Scholar, Deputy Minister of Defence Production

S. Hart Green, Q.C., Crown counsel
A. M. Shinbane, Q.C., Crown counsel

Journalism

Max Freedman, Political analyst
Gene Telpner, Journalist
Val Werier, Editor
Nathan Zimmerman, Editor

Medicine

Dr. Harry Medovy, Head, Winnipeg Children's Hospital
Dr. Charles B. Ripstein, Head, Department of Surgery, Albert Einstein Hospital, New York City
Dr. Cecil G. Sheps, Executive Director, Beth Israel Hospital, Boston
Dr. Mindel C. Sheps, Lecturer, Harvard University
Dr. Maxwell M. Winetrobe, Hematologist, University of Utah

Science

Dr. Louis Slotin, Nuclear physicist
Dr. Leo Yaffe, Nuclear physicist

There has been a definite pattern of economic mobility among Manitoba's Jews but it has been a gradual one. The first Jews who came to this province were pedlars, traders, tailors, shopkeepers, and artisans. Some few were farmers and a fair number were unskilled labourers. Gradually pedlars acquired stores and became merchants, tailors set up shops in their homes and ventured into clothing manufacturing at first on a very small scale. These were the first Jews to enter the middle class. Draymen, milkmen, and railway and factory workers who could not improve their financial condition too greatly stayed on in the working class and dreamed of a better life for their children. The mark of the next generation was a steady improvement, an upward swing from small stores and shops to larger and more substantial establishments. Many left the labouring class of their fathers behind and became clerks, managers, teachers, white collar workers, independent small businessmen, and professional men. This second generation were in a position, as parents, to plan a university education for their children. The doors to professional training were opened wide when the University of Manitoba eliminated quotas in its

School of Medicine and pioneered a policy of admittance on the basis of ability alone. With the mitigation of discrimination in industry beginning with World War II and the boom era following the war, the way was opened for those who wished to train as doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants, scientific researchers, and engineers.

According to the 1951 Canadian census the majority of the Jews in Manitoba are self-employed businessmen. The second largest group is in manufacturing, either as owners or as workers. In third place is the clerical group which includes managers, secretaries, and book-keepers and this is followed by those in the professions. The remainder of the Jewish populace in Manitoba is engaged in personal services, transportation, and construction.

Chapter Six

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

IN 1877 LORD DUFFERIN, Governor General of Canada, spent several weeks travelling through Manitoba. At the end of his visit he came to Winnipeg and told its people what impressions and insights he had gleaned from his observations in the ethnic settlements of the province. He noted with satisfaction that "a community of interests, the sense of being engaged in a common undertaking—has amalgamated the various sections of the population of this Province originally so diverse in race, origin and religions, into a patriotic, closely welded and united whole."¹ This description of the ethnic character of the province foretold on a large canvas the character of the first Jewish group which was to spring up in Winnipeg.

The earliest settlement of Jews in Manitoba reflected in microcosm the diversity of the entire province except that its members shared, at least, a common religious faith. Still, it was a loose amalgam of people—emancipated Jews from west Europe, oppressed Jews from the Russian Pale, English-speaking Jews from the British Isles, the United States, and Canada. Increasingly, they were men who, attracted by the beginnings of an economic boom in the province and by the expanding railway, were earnest and sincere about settling permanently. But there were also adventurers, itinerant traders, speculators, and drifters who came and went. Such an assortment of men presented sharp diversities in origin and cultural background making Lord Dufferin's description of a "closely welded and united whole" a cherished dream for the future. For several intervening years the conditions which prevailed within the Jewish settlement were those of religious incompatibility and spiritual vacuum.

I

The first instance when Jews in Manitoba constituted themselves as a congregation was on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, 1879.²

¹As quoted by W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 185.

²*Manitoba Free Press*, September 4, 1889.

On that day they gathered in a home and were led in prayer by one of their number. Though they did not possess a Torah Scroll, the first prerequisite for a Jewish congregation, they prayed and fasted together as a group and experienced a measure of religious identity for the first time in their new setting. During the next year the Jewish population grew and the settlers were able to collect enough money among themselves to send for a sacred Scroll from Chicago. A private home was now too small to hold the enlarged congregation so the High Holidays of 1880 were observed in the Orange Hall on Graham Street. Still more Jews continued to arrive in Winnipeg during the next year, and for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in 1881 the Oddfellow's Hall was rented in order to accommodate the increasing number of worshippers. But in spite of such a promising growth in the Jewish population, weekly Sabbath services were not yet possible, as most of the men were on the road for weeks at a time and could not be depended upon as regular Sabbath worshippers.

In June, 1881, Rev. Abraham Benjamin arrived from New Orleans entirely on his own and began to serve the community as rabbi without remuneration.³ Though not an ordained rabbi he had studied Hebraic law and lore in a European Jewish academy and was able to chant the services, read the Torah, and teach the children an elementary knowledge of Hebrew. It was Rev. A. Benjamin who officiated at the wedding of Annie Feinberg and David Ripstein on July 29, 1882,⁴ the first Jewish wedding to take place in Manitoba.

II

Unlike the early settlers, the Russian-Jewish immigrants who began to come to Manitoba in large numbers in 1882 brought with them a regular and deeply-ingrained pattern of religious life. Though they came from remote towns, distant villages, and widely scattered hamlets and differed in some respects, these people had in common a distinct and special relationship to one institution. This was the synagogue around which their lives were ordered simply and significantly. It was to the synagogue and its rabbis that the Jews from eastern Europe had looked for instruction in what was right and what was wrong; for generations it had transmitted the prohibitions and the sanctions of a carefully patterned religious life. From the well of their traditions, preserved in large part through the synagogue, Russian Jews had

³Ibid., June 25, 1881.

⁴Ibid., June 29, 1882.

developed a group outlook, a complex ritual, and a calendar of devotional moods which gave their lives meaning and purpose.

Once they had arrived in Manitoba and settled in Winnipeg's immigration sheds, they immediately established regular services and Sabbath study groups. They, too, had no formally ordained rabbi but there were a number among them who were former *yeshiva* students, men who had in their childhood and youth pursued Talmudic studies in academies of Jewish learning in Russia. Even the less learned among them were generally literate in the Bible and Hebrew liturgy and thoroughly familiar with religious ritual.

With the arrival of the newcomers the more devout Jews of the pre-1882 settlement were heartened and strengthened in their religious interests and prepared to observe the High Holidays of 1882 in a manner becoming a larger Jewish community. Taking note of the vigorous preparations under way, the *Manitoba Free Press* sent reporters to observe the service. The unusual rites of Yom Kippur were described in the press ten days before:

The following week, Saturday, 23 inst., the great Day of Atonement, will be celebrated. This is strictly observed as a most solemn fast by every Hebrew throughout the world, not a morsel of food or a drop of any kind of drink being tasted between sun-setting of Friday evening and that of Saturday evening following, and no indulgence in any kind of pleasure being allowed. A number of the people remain in the place of worship during the whole night and whole day, giving themselves entirely up to their devotional exercises.⁵

According to the report the "conductors of the service" were Kieva Barsky and Jacob Schragge, who would officiate in the absence of any "regularly appointed rabbis." The officers of this temporary Wesley Hall congregation were David Ripstein, president, Jacob Goldblum, vice-president, and Benny Rosenthal, treasurer. A cordial invitation was extended by these officials to any gentiles who might wish to attend the services. However, the non-Jewish visitors were cautioned in advance of their coming that the men would "be expected to conform with the customs of the community, by wearing their hats during the service, as it is considered irreverent to worship with the head uncovered." In conclusion there was one more bit of information, that it was customary for the men to be seated in one portion of the room and the women in another.

Two days later, on September 16, the *Free Press* devoted considerable space to the "impressive services in Wesley Hall on Thursday last."⁶ There were, reported the lengthy article, some two hundred and

⁵*Ibid.*, September 13, 1882.

⁶*Ibid.*, September 16, 1882.

fifty people in attendance. The appearance of the worshippers was highly respectable, considering the fact that most of the people had arrived in the country in destitute circumstances only a few months before. Judging by the High Holiday gathering, the *Free Press* believed that the people possessed a very strong attachment to the religion of their fathers for in order to hold the service considerable expenditure of both time and money was necessary. "The New Year's celebration," said the article, "was observed with greatest unanimity. All work ceased, and not a shop or office was kept open by any Hebrew between sundown on Wednesday and sundown on Friday evenings."⁷ Many of the men, it observed, had come into Winnipeg from their jobs on the C.P.R. line to the west of the city and they would be without earning power for almost ten days, until the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement services were reported fully and vividly in the *Press*.⁸ The fast day, according to the eyewitness was observed with "customary stringency and solemnity." The abstinence from food and drink for the twenty-four-hour period told severely on some of the women folk who fainted during the day. In the absence of an ordained rabbi pious men led the services which were chanted in a "peculiar tone" and had a somewhat strange effect on the gentiles present during various portions of the services. Curiosity was excited among the non-Jews by the prayer scarves worn by the men, the separate seating of men and women, and the respect shown the "parchment rolls of the law by the whole congregation rising when they were displayed to view."⁹ The witness further noted that the confessions of sin made by the Hebrews were of "a very detailed and comprehensive character, and the blessings supplicated include almost everything that could be thought of as desirable to be received during the year." An interesting prayer was that offered up for the Queen of Great Britain, a prayer heard for the first time by the majority of Hebrews present. In concluding his story the reporter indicated that the Winnipeg Hebrews intended to hold weekly services on Saturdays "in some convenient private house."

During the first harrowing winter of 1882 spent in the immigration sheds, five infants died of malnutrition and exposure; a Jewish cemetery was urgently needed. Simon Lechtzier approached several of the pioneer Jewish settlers on this matter and David Ripstein responded by offering a gift of land on Thomas Street which, it turned out, was adjacent to a disreputable neighbourhood.¹⁰ The infants were buried in this cemetery but it was considered only a

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, September 25, 1882.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰From an interview with Philip Lechtzier, son of Simon Lechtzier.

temporary burial place. The immigrants immediately set to work to find a more satisfactory location for the cemetery and found it in Elmwood, northeast of the city on the road to Transcona. David Ripstein collected the necessary funds and in the spring of 1883, though the snow was yet on the ground, a large group of Jewish immigrants set out to measure off and lay out plots. One of these immigrants of 1882 described the ceremony some thirty years later.

We bought the cemetery in a mood of pessimism. We wondered, each of us to himself, whose children would be buried there first? And yet at the same time we dedicated the burial ground with a sense of consolation knowing that we would now have a dignified Jewish resting place. We borrowed several sleighs with horses, seated ourselves close together and took with us eighteen bottles of liquor. We had decided to measure off the grounds properly in preparation for eventual need. When we arrived at the Elmwood location we got off the sleighs and in parties we circled the area as if to lay official claim to the place. After this procedure we recited a number of chapters out of Psalms, we sang Hymns and partook of the liquor each man shouting "Le-chayim!" (To Life!) We then danced on the snow-covered field and completed thereby the dedication ceremony. Several months later, in June around the Shevuot Festival, we transferred the bodies of the five infants from the old site to the new and the "Hebrew Cemetery of Winnipeg" began to serve its purpose.¹¹

Several weeks later with the coming of Passover, the Jewish community rented a hall on the corner of Main and Logan Streets above the store of Brown and Coblenz in which to hold its holiday service.¹² During Passover week one hundred and twenty-five men worshipped there, seventeen having come in from outside the city where they had been working on the C.P.R. line.

III

By this time there were close to four hundred Jews in Winnipeg and the need for a permanent synagogue was becoming more and more pressing. In August, 1883, Winnipeg's Jews met to consider this need and decided to build a synagogue at an approximate cost of five thousand dollars. The proposed site was a lot between Logan and McWilliams Streets, a short distance west of Main Street.¹³ On August 28 a committee started out to solicit contributions among Jews

¹¹A. Osovsky, "Jews in Winnipeg," *Der Kanader Yid*, May 16, 1912. This story was related to the A. Osovsky, author of the article, by the 1882 pioneer, Wolf Moskowitz.

¹²*Manitoba Free Press*, April 18, 1883.

¹³*Ibid.*, August 7, 1883.

and gentiles of the city. They met with great encouragement which showed that they had the sympathy of a considerable number of influential citizens who were unwilling "that Winnipeg should be any longer behind any American city of importance in the matter of possessing a synagogue."¹⁴ The *Manitoba Free Press* carried a list of the first contributors and their contributions: Mayor McMicken, \$25; D. Ripstein, \$50; S. Ripstein, \$40; J. Ripstein, \$25; B. Rosenthal, \$25; Bannatyne & Co., \$50; R. J. Whitla, \$25; McNab, McLean & Co., \$25; Hon. A. G. B. Bannatyne, \$20; John B. McKilligan, \$10; S. A. Bertrand, \$10; Frank Rigney, \$10; J. H. Ashdown, \$20.¹⁵ The fund was augmented a day later and additional subscribers were listed: Thos. Ryan, \$20; John J. Johnstone, \$10; John Fraser, \$10; D. McKenzie, \$10; Stobart, Eden and Company, \$10; The Lieutenant Governor, \$20. David Ripstein next set out on a tour of Manitoba to canvas his Hebrew brethren as well as those gentiles who wished to support the project.¹⁶

Having just begun their campaign for a building fund and being still without a synagogue the Jews of Winnipeg held their High Holiday Services in October, 1883, in Albert Hall. Rabbi J. Friedman was invited from Montreal to serve as religious leader for the young community.¹⁷ After the Holidays a meeting was held to elect officers for the ensuing year. It was reported then that the building fund was growing and that work on the new structure would begin before winter set in. At a five-hour-long meeting officers were elected: David Ripstein, president; Louis Vineberg, vice-president; Philip Brown, Abraham Max, B. Simon, and Simon Ripstein, trustees; A. B. Coblenz, secretary-treasurer; and Nissel Zimmerman, assistant secretary. The new executive was composed of pioneer settlers as well as recent arrivals. Both groups were clearly making a serious attempt to work together on behalf of a community synagogue.¹⁸

IV

But in spite of these sincere intentions the disparate elements in the community began to disagree on matters of religious ideology and it became obvious that the short-lived coalition between the German-Jewish residents who leaned towards Reform Judaism and the Russian-Jewish arrivals who were traditionally Orthodox was an unproductive one. The Orthodox who were in the overwhelming majority wanted

¹⁴*Ibid.*, August 29, 1883.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, October 3, 1883.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, August 30, 1883.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, October 24, 1883.

a traditional synagogue as they had known it in Europe, whereas the Reform group were eager to establish a synagogue on the American liberal pattern. In April, 1884, the Reform group established the Montefiore Hebrew Benevolent Society whose objects were "to promote some means to aid the erection of a Jewish reformed temple, and to assist deserving objects of charity."¹⁹ Eighteen charter members were enrolled in the new organization and officers elected were: Philip Brown, president; Louis Wertheim, vice-president; A. B. Coblenz, secretary; George Frankfurter, treasurer; Louis Vineberg, L. Blinkensten, and Leo Wertheim, trustees.

The Montefiore Benevolent Society decided to constitute itself as a congregation and took the name of Beth El. On Friday evening July 11, 1884, it held its first service in a rented room on the second floor of the Harris Block. Assembling on the third floor of the same building they arranged themselves in a procession. Philip Brown and K. Freeman marched around the room carrying two Scrolls of the Law while the procession followed to the accompaniment of organ music. After an opening address by Philip Brown in which he expressed the hope that by this time next year they would have erected their own synagogue, all marched, two by two, to the door of the rented synagogue on the floor below. Twenty-five ladies bearing lighted candles preceded the procession; Brown and Freeman followed with the Torahs and the congregation came after. At the door of the synagogue they gave three knocks and uttered a petition to the Lord for permission to enter and to offer their prayers. When the congregation was seated addresses were delivered by Rabbi J. Friedman, Rev. A. Benjamin, and others. Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, and the Royal Family were remembered and the ladies sang "God Save the Queen." Contributions were announced at the service, the total coming to one hundred and fifty dollars.²⁰ Thus was launched the effort on behalf of a reformed temple. In this house of worship the English sermon was to be a focal point, some of the prayers were to be read in English, an organ would be installed, and men and women would share common pews. These innovations constituted major departures from the Orthodox pattern of worship.

The reformed dissidents removed from their midst, the Orthodox congregation now continued as the Sons of Israel in their rented quarters at the corner of Main and Cameron Streets. In the mean-

¹⁹*Ibid.*, April 29, 1884. The Society was named for Sir Moses Montefiore who, in 1884, was being honoured on the occasion of his one hundredth birthday.

²⁰*Ibid.*, July 12, 1884.

time the building fund campaign, begun a year before, came to a standstill and plans for construction were postponed, the money remaining with the congregation, Sons of Israel. In December, 1884, they announced plans for a ball to be held on the evening of December 17 "on the occasion of the celebration of Hanuccah."²¹ The Hanuccah celebration was a great social and financial success. The press reported:

The occasion is the observance of the Hebrew Feast of Hanuccah, and is in commemoration of the victory by the Maccabees over the Syrians and the subsequent rededication of the second Temple 164 B.C. Among those present were noticed Mayor Logan, Mayor-elect Hamilton, Ald. Carruthers, Mr. John MacBeth, M.F.P., Mr. Ossenbrugge, German Consul, Prof. and Mrs. Atcherson, Mr. Hespeler, Mr. and Mrs. L. Wertheim, Mr. and Mrs. Cohn, Mr. and Mrs. B. Rosenthal, Mr. and Mrs. A. Bieber, Mr. and Mrs. A. Max. The programme consisted of all the latest dances, and with Prof. Atcherson as Master of Ceremonies, excellent music by the Italian string band, and a large and brilliant assembly, the ball could not be otherwise than a success.²²

The Sons of Israel were overwhelmed by the success of their Hanuccah ball. They were particularly pleased by the gentle response to their event and as an expression of appreciation to the community they allotted the sum of twenty dollars to the Winnipeg General Hospital. They further resolved to sponsor a Purim Festival Ball in the spring, a masquerade for which costumes would be imported from Chicago.²³

In October, 1884, the world took note of the one hundredth birthday of a dedicated Jew, loyal Englishman, and genuine humanitarian—the legendary Sir Moses Montefiore. Monarchs, statesmen, religious leaders of all faiths paid generous tribute to this great English Jew who had achieved international renown, in particular, because he championed his people's cause indefatigably. Along with Jewish communities the world over the young Jewish community in Winnipeg paid its tribute to Moses Montefiore.

On Sunday, October 26, 1884, the two Winnipeg Hebrew Congregations, Beth El and Sons of Israel gathered in their respective houses of worship, Beth El in the Harris Block on Princess Street and Sons of Israel in the building at Main and Cameron Streets. At each of the services prayers were read on behalf of the venerable philanthropist and addresses of adulation were presented before the congregation.²⁴ The Beth El testimonial was addressed to Montefiore on behalf of "the officers and members of the Congregation Beth El of the Hebrew

²¹*Ibid.*, December 6, 1884.

²²*Ibid.*, January 6, 1885.

²³*Ibid.*, December 18, 1884.

²⁴*Ibid.*, October 25, 1884.

Nation, presently in the city of Winnipeg, the capital of the great Northwest of the Dominion of Canada." The address went on to say that Montefiore's name "is now and will continue to be for generations to come a household word amongst us, and not only amongst us, members of that persuasion, made illustrious by your example, but also amongst the nations who have benefitted by your liberality and universal charity." The Beth El address prayed that the aged Montefiore be blessed with "years equal those of great prototype, Moses, the son of Amram, who lived 120 years."

Not to be outdone by its sister congregation, the Sons of Israel also presented an address to Sir Moses at their service. In part it read: "Although far separated from you, sir, and humbly endeavoring in a new country to better our position in life, yet, we can assure you that your name is most familiar in our household, and your noble and manly character is ever held up by us as an example to those whom God, in His infinite goodness, has entrusted to our care."²⁵

After each of the congregations conducted separate services in their respective synagogues, the Sons of Israel formed a procession. Headed by Nissel Zimmerman who carried a large portrait of Montefiore, and Messrs. Schragge, Slerganburg, Cohan and D. Ripstein, each carrying a flag, the procession marched to Beth El Synagogue where they were welcomed by Mr. George Frankfurter, president of Beth El. At the joint assembly further tributes were paid to Montefiore by Philip Brown and Louis Wertheim. In the evening of that historic Sunday members of both congregations buried personal and theological differences and danced together in unity at Albert Hall, in honour of the great English Jew. Seven months later in June, 1885, a letter was received from Montefiore acknowledging the two illuminated addresses received from Winnipeg. In appreciation of Winnipeg Jewry's thoughtfulness the centenarian philanthropist enclosed a token gift of five pounds in aid of the Sabbath School Fund of Beth El Congregation.²⁶ The Sons of Israel may have received similar acknowledgment. However, no record has been found of such a gift.

V

In March, 1886, two proposals were made before the Jewish community that a synagogue be built jointly by both congregations. Louis Wertheim, who had transferred his loyalty to the Orthodox Sons of Israel, had just returned from a visit to Germany and he convened a

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., June 13, 1885.

mass meeting for the purpose of launching a joint building campaign. At the meeting he reported that he had gone to Europe primarily to raise funds for a synagogue in Winnipeg and that he had succeeded in raising \$3,000 for that purpose. Many in attendance at the meeting favoured the erection of a structure, but the majority were against it and nothing came of Wertheim's proposal.²⁷

Beth El members responded to the Wertheim gathering with a public event of their own in mid-March when they invited Rabbi Wechsler of the St. Paul Reform Congregation to address a Winnipeg audience. On the evening of Tuesday, March 16, 1886, Rabbi Wechsler "delivered an interesting lecture in Victoria Hall in aid of the enterprise of erecting a synagogue in this city."²⁸ His subject, which according to report he discussed "in an able manner," was the "Preservation of Israel." Rabbi Wechsler spoke of the "progressive Judaism of our day." He said that Jews were not divided into sects, "nevertheless there was a progressive Judaism and also an orthodox Judaism, the latter evoking more literally the teachings of the Bible, and the former recognizing the spirit of the age." Rabbi Wechsler expressed his sympathy with the movement for erecting a synagogue in Winnipeg and expressed his "pleasure at witnessing the liberal and cosmopolitan spirit of the citizens."²⁹ His lecture was received with great interest by the audience but there was no immediate tangible progress in the matter of a synagogue building. But the leadership of Beth El Congregation was more than ever interested in developing a synagogue which would incorporate the traditions of their faith into a dignified and modern framework. Under the auspices of such a synagogue they hoped to organize a proper Jewish education programme for their children. Believing that separate congregations could not effect these desired goals, they made overtures to the Sons of Israel Congregation and succeeded in achieving a merger with a portion of that group. The merger became official in the summer of 1887, when the two groups united under a new name, Beth El of Israel.³⁰

In its annual survey concerning the progress of Winnipeg's churches the *Free Press* made the following observations concerning the religious affiliations of Winnipeg Jewry:

There are three congregations of the Hebrew faith in the city. One of them, the German synagogue, maintains its services without the aid of a rabbi, the others, the congregation Beth El of Israel, enjoys the ministrations of Rabbi Friedman, while that of the Sons of Israel has Rabbi

²⁷*Ibid.*, March 1, 1886.

²⁹*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*, March 16, 1886.

³⁰*Ibid.*, August 13, 1887.

Feigeson. While efforts have been made with a view to building a synagogue, the people have so far been unable to build three and have not seen their way to unity to build one, although so far as the number of the total population is concerned, one of respectable dimensions would suffice. Outsiders are apt to underestimate the work accomplished and the progress made, owing to the divisions which exist; a much more favourable as well as a more correct opinion would be formed if the results could be seen continued. United, the Hebrews would form a congregation of very respectable members, and they would soon possess a building creditable alike to themselves and the city.³¹

The newspaper's sound advice may have been helpful in pushing toward the goal of a united synagogue. This achievement was hastened, too, by the departure of several individuals, original founders of each congregation, who during 1887-8 moved to eastern Canada and the United States. The leadership of the Jewish community was beginning to be concentrated in fewer hands and was becoming stronger and more influential.

Through 1888 and 1889, Beth El of Israel leaders worked vigorously for the establishment of a synagogue and finally their efforts bore fruit. At a meeting held in Albert Hall on August 4, 1889, it was resolved that immediate steps be taken to erect a synagogue, the Shaarey Zedek.³² The expenditure for the projected structure was set at \$4,000 to \$5,000 exclusive of the cost of the site which was estimated at \$2,000. A building committee of twelve was appointed with Philip Brown as chairman, A. Benjamin as secretary, C. H. Risky as assistant secretary, and T. Finkelstein as treasurer. A subscription list amounting to \$2,175 was announced immediately.³³ Thirty days later, on September 3, 1889, the cornerstone was laid on the site that had been acquired at the corner of King and Cameron Streets. It was a great day for Jewish residents and they observed it in auspicious manner with processions, stirring speeches, and elaborate ceremonies conducted by the Rev. Canon O'Meara, Grand Master of the Lodge of Free Masons.³⁴

Eight months later, on Thursday evening, March 20, 1890, the dedication of the new Shaarey Zedek Synagogue took place. According to the press the ceremonies which were attended by scores of Jews and

³¹*Ibid.*, December 24, 1887. The third congregation referred to in this news report was a small off-shoot of the Sons of Israel which broke off in September, 1885 and was led by Rev. Feigeson.

³²Philip Brown, originally from Detroit, borrowed the name of the synagogue with which he had been affiliated in that city.

³³*Manitoba Free Press*, August 5, 1889.

³⁴See Arthur A. Chiel, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1955) for a detailed treatment of Shaarey Zedek's beginnings.

gentiles were "solemn and impressive." Among the leading citizens participating were Mayor Pearson, Mr. D. McArthur, Alderman Joseph Wolf, Mr. R. Strong, and Mr. A. Strong. The services were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Marks, a Minneapolis rabbi, assisted by Rev. Abraham Benjamin, the resident rabbi.³⁵ In his sermon, described as "one of the finest pulpit addresses ever heard in Winnipeg," Rabbi Marks admonished the Shaarey Zedek congregants that they follow up the dedication of their beautiful structure with a vigorous adherence to their religious duties.³⁶ He urged that their attachment to their new place of worship should not be like "an electric flash" but that their present joy should be "as lasting as the affection of the bridegroom for his bride." Above all, Rabbi Marks urged the necessity of conducting the religious services in a decorous manner that would appeal to the highest sense of refinement and with quietness and decorum.

VI

It was the hope of the founders of Shaarey Zedek that the membership of the new congregation would embrace the entire Jewish community. To facilitate a single, united congregation Shaarey Zedek leaders made provision for services to be held according to both prayer rituals, the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic,³⁷ since there were observers of both rituals living in Winnipeg. *Minhag Ashkenaz* prayers were to be read in the main worship hall while *Minhag Sephard* ones were to be followed in an adjoining small chapel. The followers of the Sephardic ritual were required to be members of the congregation-at-large but in addition to paying regular membership dues they were to provide for their own clergy and to pay for all expenses involved in the small chapel's maintenance. The Sephardim could elect their own officers "to manage their internal affairs" but would be governed by the rules and regulations laid down by the Synagogue's Board of Officers.³⁸ In theory the arrangement with the Sephardic ritual adherents appeared feasible but apparently one organization within another was bound to lead to conflict. Shortly after Shaarey Zedek was dedicated, the Sephardic members were informed that their

³⁵A detailed treatment of the Shaarey Zedek dedication is to be found in Arthur A. Chiel, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1955).

³⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, March 22, 1890.

³⁷The Ashkenazic prayer ritual had its roots in Germany during the Middle Ages, the Sephardic ritual in Spain somewhat earlier. As the Jews migrated to eastern Europe they carried their separate rituals with them and later brought them to Winnipeg.

³⁸Minutes of Shaarey Zedek Congregation, August 25, 1889.

separate service was unwelcome.³⁹ Dissolution of the Sephardic services at Shaarey Zedek led to the establishment of another synagogue, Congregation Sons of Israel.

Sons of Israel acquired a small wooden frame structure on the corner of Henry and Mary Streets and established their own house of worship, in April, 1890. In December, 1892, it was destroyed by fire. The congregation purchased a lot directly across from their original site and built a new synagogue which was dedicated on August 24, 1893, under the new name of Rosh Pina Congregation.⁴⁰ Rosh Pina developed into a traditional synagogue closely approximating the eastern European house of worship in its intimacy and informality. Its minute book records that a large sign posted in the lobby of the synagogue read:

Everyone who attends the synagogue on Sabbath or Holiday for prayer must demean himself properly and not remove his prayer shawl until the end of the service. If anyone should be overpowered by hunger and not wish to remain to the end, let him go quietly to the lobby, take his shawl off and proceed to fulfill his need.

The membership of Rosh Pina was strongly partial to the cantorial art and the congregation engaged, in succession, several cantors of good reputation, outstanding among them Reverends Schorr and Singerman. Because of its eastern European character and flavour, its love of *chazzanut*, and the moderate financial demands it made upon its members, the synagogue attracted many of the new immigrants. An interesting innovation at Rosh Pina was an auxiliary organization, the Bikkur Cholim Society, which offered a sick benefit plan to its members in return for a monthly premium of twenty-five cents. For this amount, a Bikkur Cholim representative was ready to attend a person who required nursing attention. It also partially defrayed the cost of a physician and medicine.

In the beginning Shaarey Zedek's leaders attempted to establish the supremacy of their synagogue in the Jewish community, but Rosh Pina leaders were alert to signs of potential infringement on their autonomy as a religious body. In January, 1894, Shaarey Zedek officials requested the Manitoba Legislature to pass an act which would allow only the clergy of their synagogue to solemnize Jewish marriages in Manitoba. Such exclusive control over an important religious function would give Shaarey Zedek a dominant role in the Jewish community. The formal petition which was submitted by Shaarey Zedek proposed that:

³⁹Ibid., April 7, 1890.

⁴⁰Manitoba Free Press, August 25, 1893.

No person who professes the Jewish faith or religion shall be considered as duly ordained or appointed unless such person shall have been so ordained or appointed by at least twenty members of a Jewish synagogue or congregation which is incorporated under the provision of some statute passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.⁴¹

Under such an act Shaarey Zedek which had been incorporated by the Legislature in 1892 would have gained full authority in Jewish religious affairs. Rosh Pina leaders believed this to be unfair and hastened to submit a counter-brief to the effect that " it would be manifestly unfair to give any one of the congregations the power to regulate the marriage ceremonies in the others."⁴² It was also their contention that if Shaarey Zedek would gain a monopoly in the performance of marriage ceremonies, it would redound to their financial advantage.⁴³ Provincial authorities carefully evaluated the original petition made by Shaarey Zedek and the counter-arguments of Rosh Pina and accepted the legitimacy of the objections raised. It rejected Shaarey Zedek's petition and thereby assured the autonomous religious rights of Jewish congregations in the province.

VII

This conflict did not mark the end of differences in Jewish religious life. Several years later discord split the membership of Shaarey Zedek when a portion of them began to agitate for "a more modern religious service." One of the leaders of this reforming group was Henry A. Isaacs, an English Jew and secretary of the congregation. Isaacs wrote about the dissension in Shaarey Zedek ranks: "The Congregation grew in all ways except progress, and with the advent of fresh blood with more modern ideas, the rise of a growing Canadian generation, the view of some of the members that the needs of their children were not being attended in proper manner, a certain feeling of dissatisfaction arose."⁴⁴ Henry A. Isaacs and his fellow protestors felt that at Shaarey Zedek "everything was of much the same nature as the members had been accustomed to within the Pale." This dissatisfied group had attempted to achieve change within Shaarey Zedek for more than a decade after its founding. They had petitioned the leadership on many occasions for "betterment of decorum, for English sermons, for intelligibility and attractiveness of services to the young." But they remained unheeded.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, January 29, 1894. ⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*, February 1, 1894.

⁴⁴*Reform Advocate* (Winnipeg Edition), 1914.

In November, 1903, Isaacs together with M. H. Saunders, A. Goldstone, and Alfred I. Frankfurter sent a circular to Winnipeg Jewish residents inviting them to attend a public meeting for the purpose of considering plans to organize services "along modern lines."⁴⁵ At this meeting a final effort was made to prevail upon Shaarey Zedek leaders to adopt the proposed innovation but without success. The traditionalists would not yield one iota.

The determination of the dissidents was strong and at a subsequent meeting they resolved to establish a congregation more radically reform than initially contemplated. To establish beyond question that they were now definitely separated from Orthodoxy, they took the name Holy Blossom Congregation, from the prominent Toronto synagogue of the same name. Through advertisements in American Anglo-Jewish publications they engaged Reverend Dr. D. A. Bonnheim, a Reform rabbi of Las Vegas, to serve for two years. His official responsibility to the congregation began with the High Holy Days in September, 1904. The newspaper reported concerning his first service:

Holy Blossom Church
New Jewish Congregation Begins Services In
Maccabee Hall.

The new Reformed Congregation, Holy Blossom, began its New Year's services last evening in the Maccabee Hall, south side of Pacific Avenue, between Main and King Streets. There was a good attendance, a large portion of them being young men. Rev. D. A. Bonnheim, D.D., the new rabbi, officiated reading the prayers, some in Hebrew and some in English; also the other parts of the exercises. He did not preach a sermon, but announced that he would do so at the morning services commencing at 9:30 o'clock. Strangers who have visited the orthodox Hebrew congregations in the city will notice several striking departures in the worship of the Holy Blossom Synagogue. The worshippers have this in common, that none of the men remove their hats; but there is this difference in the seating of the people, that no separation is made in the new synagogue, between the men and the women, while in the older ones the women sit entirely by themselves and are not even in the sight of the men, a curtain or partition separating them. Before reading the opening prayer, the rabbi intimated that he did not wish the people to be silent listeners, and asked them to join in uttering the responses at the places indicated for the congregation to take part. He also expressed the hope that good order would be characteristic of all the proceedings. These requests were heeded, the responses were duly given by the worshippers, and the utmost decorum was observed. The prevailing impression on the minds of the young people by the use of the English language appeared favorable.⁴⁶

⁴⁵*Manitoba Free Press*, November 7, 1903.

⁴⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, September 10, 1904.

Rev. Bonnheim let it be known that he was eager to have gentiles attend his services. In an interview with a reporter he also indicated that "he wishes to be in touch with the progressive spirit of the age." The rabbi showed the interviewer a flattering letter which he had received from Dr. Selby, an Episcopalian minister of Tucson, Arizona, and averred that both Dr. Selby and he wished "to see among Christians and Jews a more liberal and charitable spirit, Ephraim not envying Judah and Judah not vexing Ephraim."⁴⁷

On Yom Kippur, September 22, 1904, Rev. Bonnheim preached on the theme, "Create in Me a Clean Heart," concerning which the reporter wrote that "Gentiles who are prone to believe that the sermons of Jewish rabbis are little more than a string of metaphysical subtleties, dealing with the legends of the Talmud, would have been pleasantly surprised had they attended the services at the Maccabee Hall on Monday."⁴⁸

After the High Holy Days Rev. Bonnheim proceeded to establish a Bible Class for young people and a Sunday School for children. The enthusiasm among Holy Blossom members prompted their decision in November, 1904, to build a new house of worship. But as the months went by the initial enthusiasm waned and criticism of Rev. Bonnheim's too radical philosophy mounted. In June, 1905, Rev. Bonnheim left Winnipeg permanently. According to Henry A. Isaacs "it was found that the ideas of the founders were of a somewhat too liberal scope to suit the requirements of the many whose views were of a more conservative nature."⁴⁹

But the founders of Holy Blossom remained determined in their desire and efforts for a more modern synagogue. They arrived at the conclusion that a new congregation of modern-traditional outlook would have better success than their original experiment. To avoid the Reform stigma, they discarded the name of Holy Blossom and reconstituted themselves as the Shaarey Shomayim Congregation. In November, 1905, Rabbi Dr. Elias Friedlander of Montreal was invited to take the pulpit of Shaarey Shomayim Congregation. During Dr. Friedlander's incumbency as rabbi the congregation began to build a house of worship on Dagmar Street, facing the east side of the William Avenue Library. On May 7, 1907, the cornerstone of Shaarey Shomayim was laid in the presence of provincial and city dignitaries. For unknown reasons Dr. Friedlander resigned from his pulpit in July, 1907. He was succeeded one month later by Rev. J. K. Levin,

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, September 19, 1904.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, September 22, 1904.

⁴⁹*Reform Advocate* (Winnipeg Edition), 1914.

a recent graduate of Jews' College in London, England, who had been recommended to Shaarey Shomayim by Chief Rabbi Dr. Herman Adler. Shortly after Rev. Levin's arrival in Winnipeg, on September 1, 1907, the Shaarey Shomayim Synagogue was dedicated.

Shaarey Shomayim, under Rev. Levin's guidance established itself as a dignified congregation in the community. Members of the Shaarey Shomayim were particularly proud of the mode of worship in their synagogue and felt that their services were "an object lesson to visitors who wondered at the perfect decorum which always prevailed."⁵⁰ But in spite of this ostensible achievement the Shaarey Shomayim people were unhappy over the paucity of attendance at the regular services throughout the year. They had genuinely believed that dignity in worship would attract a regular participation but their hopes were disappointed. "The same trouble arose here," wrote Henry A. Isaacs, "as is noticeable in England, the United States, Eastern Canada and elsewhere, of poor attendance at the services." During this period Shaarey Zedek Congregation began to realize with dismay that it was Shaarey Shomayim and not their synagogue which had begun to attract the younger English-speaking members who they felt would have been members in their own synagogue and would have represented the continuity which they sought. On several occasions they put out feelers to Shaarey Shomayim's leadership for a possible merger but the rancour engendered by the break away from the mother congregation was still strong.

In June, 1912, Rev. J. K. Levin accepted a call to Helena, Montana. Shaarey Shomayim engaged Rabbi Solomon Philo as successor to Rev. Levin but Philo proved too radically Reform in his views to suit the chastened leaders of the synagogue, who remembered only too well their unhappy period under Rev. Bonnheim. Not long after he had come to Shaarey Shomayim, Rabbi Philo had, without consultation, performed the marriage of a gentile man and a Jewish woman. This constituted a breaking point with congregation leaders and Rabbi Philo was dismissed.

Meanwhile the element of time had healed the wound between the leaders of Shaarey Zedek and those of Shaarey Shomayim and a *rapprochement* was sought by both congregations. Shaarey Zedek was amenable to certain changes, Shaarey Shomayim was having rabbi trouble—why not solve their mutual difficulties through union? During the months of May, June, and July, 1913, many exploratory meetings took place between the representatives of both congregations. Eventually the sincere desire for unification prevailed and a general

⁵⁰Ibid.

meeting of both congregations was convened at Shaarey Shomayim Synagogue. A joint board of officials to direct affairs was appointed consisting of David Ripstein, Simon Ripstein, A. W. Myers, H. L. Weidman, S. Bere, and H. Steinkopf of Shaarey Zedek and Henry A. Isaacs, George Frankfurter, R. S. Robinson, M. Haid, D. Balcovske, and A. Fred representing Shaarey Shomayim. It was decided to adopt the name of Shaarey Zedek for the united congregation and that alterations should be made in the Shaarey Shomayim Synagogue to accommodate a seating capacity of seven hundred worshippers. It was further decided that a new rabbi be sought who could preach in English and could serve ably as a "Jewish minister." In the interim Rev. Elias Cashdan, cantor of Shaarey Zedek, who had been serving since 1908 in the dual capacity of cantor-teacher was to fill the religious needs of the congregation. As a symbolic concession to the decorum-conscious Shaarey Shomayim followers, Rev. Cashdan was required to wear a gown when officiating in the synagogue.⁵¹

The new board of Shaarey Zedek corresponded with Chief Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz of London, England, requesting that he recommend a spiritual leader for them. The Chief Rabbi suggested Rev. Herbert J. Sandheim originally of Glasgow, Scotland, and a graduate of Jews' College, whom he described as "an earnest Jew, a forceful preacher, a deep scholar, an efficient teacher and, in fact, everything that a Jewish minister ought to be."⁵² Rev. Sandheim arrived in Winnipeg and assumed his rabbinic duties in March, 1914. For a period of twelve years, until 1926, Rabbi Sandheim served the congregation sincerely and ably. He was active in Jewish communal affairs and in community activities generally. For a time he served as chaplain of the Canadian Club and as its literary secretary.

To his parishioners Sandheim was an interpreter of tradition who spoke to them in the language of the land. To the community-at-large he was the spokesman for Jews on both Jewish and general issues. During his period of service Shaarey Zedek became a firmly established and influential congregation in Winnipeg.

VIII

In 1904 when some of the English-speaking families were turning towards Reform Judaism, a group of Orthodox Jews led by Philip

⁵¹This portion concerning the merger between Shaarey Zedek and Shaarey Shomayim is based upon the minutes of the respective congregations.

⁵²Minutes of Shaarey Zedek Congregation. An ardent British patriot, Rev. Sandheim changed his name to Samuel during Word War I. Sandheim was too German, he believed.

Lechtzier, H. Finesilver, A. Berg, L. Berger, A. Phillips, and N. Kasler began the work of building an orthodox synagogue in Winnipeg to which they gave the name Beth Jacob. The founders of Beth Jacob saw the need for a completely traditional synagogue of stately proportions. They were alert, also, to the fact that the Jewish population had largely shifted from Henry Avenue, further north, to Jarvis and Dufferin Avenues. It was their sincere belief that a properly organized synagogue in this area could become a force for good and their expectations were borne out. Beth Jacob, built at a cost of seven thousand dollars and designed to house seven hundred worshippers, became an important centre of religious life for a large group of hitherto unaffiliated Jews—long-time residents as well as newly arrived immigrants.

Beth Jacob leaders early recognized the need for a respected Orthodox rabbi who could serve both their congregation and the ever growing Jewish population in Winnipeg and western Canada. Until that period the Jewish community had never had an ordained Orthodox rabbi who could deal authoritatively with *halachic* questions (i.e. questions of Jewish religious law). In 1907 Beth Jacob leaders invited Rabbi Israel I. Kahanovitch, a native of Poland and a scholar blessed with a dynamic personality, to serve the community. Thanks to the efforts of these synagogue officials, several Winnipeg congregations as well as others in western Canada accepted Rabbi Kahanovitch's religious authority.

Rabbi Kahanovitch worked indefatigably to strengthen traditional Judaism. Nor was he limited or narrow in his approach. In writing about Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch a contemporary had this to say:

He was well endowed to minister to the wants of such a heterogeneous agglomeration. A fluent speaker, an engaging personality, possessing a rich store of Judaic knowledge, tinged with a veneer of secularism; orthodox, without fanaticism; liberal, without transgression, he is easily at home with all the factions except the hard-headed extremists whom he deliberately, yet tactfully ignores. This many-sidedness enabled him to become the Chief Rabbi, with spiritual authority over practically all the congregations in the city and Western Canada.⁵³

But the spiritual equanimity of Jewry was not destined to remain undisturbed for long. Five years after Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch's appointment a dissident group of laymen, leaders in several new Winnipeg congregations which had come into being in the years after 1907, invited Rabbi Jacob Joseph Gorodsky to be their Chief Rabbi.

⁵³H. E. Wilder, ed., *The 100th Anniversary, Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Press, 1932).

Before Rabbi Gorodsky's arrival in Winnipeg in November, 1912, the *Canadian Israelite* questioned the need for and the wisdom of a second chief rabbi in the community.

We do not question the academic attainments of the new rabbi. They may be great. But surely the scholarship of Rabbi Kahanovitch cannot be questioned, surely his outstanding leadership of the several years gone by are exemplary. Why the need for a second Chief Rabbi? Let the sundry congregations put aside their petty quarrels and accept unanimously Rabbi Kahanovitch's leadership.⁵⁴

Indeed it is to his credit that in spite of the bickerings of synagogue leaders and in spite of the appointment of a series of rabbis beginning in 1912 with Rabbi B. Gorodsky, Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch continued to exercise authority over a large number of Orthodox Jews in western Canada. Tribute to his popularity in the community was the extraordinarily large number of votes which he polled in 1919, in the popular election of representatives to the Canadian Jewish Congress. He topped all the candidates with a total of 2,673 votes. Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch served the cause of his people with understanding and devotion for thirty-eight years until his death in 1945.

As the Jewish population of North Winnipeg grew, a variety of congregations came into being, each with its own house of worship:

- 1906—B'nai Abraham, Schultz Street
- 1906—B'nai Zion, Charles Street
- 1907—Adas Yeshurun, McGregor Street
- 1912—Kildonan Synagogue, Lillian Avenue
- 1913—Tiferes Israel, Powers Street
- 1913—Tiferes Israel, Manitoba Avenue
- 1913—Chevra Mishnayos, Stella Avenue
- 1915—Synagogue, Newton Avenue
- 1917—Shaarey Zion, Aikins Street
- 1917—Synagogue, Aberdeen Avenue
- 1919—Ateres Israel, Magnus Avenue
- 1922—Lubavitcher Synagogue, Magnus Avenue
- 1922—Fort Rouge Hebrew Congregation, Nassau Street
- 1930—Ashkenazi Synagogue, Burrows Avenue

A number of these smaller congregations were served by clergy who combined the duties of cantor and *shochet*; in others, laymen conducted the services. By and large, people joined with their European friends and kinsmen and founded their own small synagogues. Self-contained and ruggedly independent, they were content to look to the immediate religious needs of their own generation, but because they

⁵⁴*Canadian Israelite*, November 28, 1912.

did not know how to bridge the religious and cultural gap between themselves and their children the thread of continuity was broken and their synagogues suffered severe decline. Today only seven of these fourteen synagogues remain with ever dwindling congregations of old folk. Thus, by the late 1930's large numbers of native-born Jews were unaffiliated and had no religious identification. Indeed they called themselves "the lost generation."

IX

The kashruth question, in particular the problem of the slaughter of poultry and cattle in accordance with religious requirements, was long a contentious issue in the community. On the one hand there were frequent allegations that rabbinic supervision was inadequate, on the other hand Jewish consumers protested the high cost of kosher meat. The conflict among kosher butchers, religious supervisors, and consumers smouldered sporadically until in 1911 a serious quarrel broke out in the community over this unhappy situation. A committee of laymen, interested in establishing firm control of kashruth and in bringing a permanent settlement to the problem, organized themselves into the Chezkas Kashruth Committee and invited Rabbi Aaron Ashinsky of Montreal to investigate the local situation.

After his investigation Rabbi Ashinsky recommended: (1) that Rabbi Kahanovitch's authority must be complete and final in kashruth matters; (2) that the synagogues of Winnipeg be organized into a Kehillah Council to achieve co-ordination in all religious affairs; (3) that the butchers must henceforth pay the Kehillah Council a fee for each head of cattle slaughtered instead of the monthly retainer which they had paid heretofore.

Immediately after Rabbi Ashinsky's departure the quarrel resumed with all its earlier vehemence. The butchers, resenting the strengthened authority of the Chief Rabbi as well as the increase in the cost of slaughtering, cried alarm and incited their customers against the Kehillah Council. In answer to the butcher's dissidence the Kehillah Council established the Hebrew Cooperative Butcher Shop which was under their direct control. With this step they attempted to bring down the price of kosher meat. A price war ensued for several months and in the end the co-operative butcher shop failed because it lacked popular support. The Kehillah Council disintegrated after only eight months of struggle for kashruth authority and the butchers, now

having matters back in their own hands, returned the city to its earlier condition of unco-ordinated and inadequate supervision.⁵⁵

A second attempt was made to strengthen rabbinic authority and to organize systematic supervision and administration of kashruth when in 1931 Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch proposed the establishment of a rabbinic council to consist of himself and his two colleagues, Rabbis Horowitz and Zilberstein.⁵⁶ Laymen who resented the idea of a strong rabbinic authority organized themselves as the Shtot Kommitet (City Committee) and tried to offset the authority of the Rabbinic Council by bringing in their own rabbi, H. S. Herson. Again the Rabbinic Council was paralyzed. But after two years responsible Jewish leaders, more than ever determined to bring order out of the chaos in the matter of kashruth, organized the Jewish Community Council and elected M. J. Finkelstein as chairman. The Community Council succeeded in placating the City Committee and invited Rabbi Herson to serve along with the other three rabbis on the Rabbinic Council.⁵⁷

But the butchers were still recalcitrant and insisted on retaining their anarchic independence. They organized themselves into the Beth Judah Congregation and now invited Rabbi Meyer Schwartzman to act as their rabbi and to supervise their shops. A protracted and bitter battle followed until 1946 when the Jewish Welfare Fund and the Canadian Jewish Congress stepped in, determined to settle the kashruth situation once and for all. It organized the Va-ad Hair, a body of representatives of all the synagogues and the butchers, whose task it was to set up a dependable system of supervision of the kosher meat establishments in the community. In addition, the Va-ad Hair assumed the responsibility of setting fees for *shochetim* and of paying the salaries of Orthodox rabbis and *shochetim* in their employ. Elected as heads of the Va-ad Hair were David Slater, president, and Sol Kanee, vice-president.

X

Beginning with the decade following World War II the Jewish community began to move from the lower North End of Winnipeg where it had been heavily concentrated for over forty years. The migration

⁵⁵*Canadian Israelite*, August 1, 1912.

⁵⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1931.

⁵⁷*Jewish Post*, June 1, 9, and 15, 1933.

took two major directions: further north into North Winnipeg and West Kildonan, and south to the opposite end of the city. Now there was urgent need to build synagogues in these new Jewish neighbourhoods.

Shaarey Zedek whose membership had largely resettled in the south end decided to sell its structure on Dagmar Street and to build a new house of worship at Wellington Crescent and Academy Road. In 1950 a stately synagogue and a religious school were dedicated and opened to serve a steadily growing congregation. Its spiritual leader was Rabbi Milton Aron, who had been called to the Shaarey Zedek pulpit in 1947. He had succeeded Rabbi Solomon Frank who had been with the congregation for twenty years and had established an outstanding record as preacher and communal leader in Winnipeg and western Canada. In North Winnipeg a new congregation was formed under the leadership of Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel in 1951. It assumed the name of the old Rosh Pina Synagogue which had, by 1950, passed out of existence. A remarkable rallying of interest in the new congregation ensued after its founding in 1951 and the new edifice with school facilities was dedicated in June, 1952. Both Shaarey Zedek and Rosh Pina affiliated with the United Synagogue of America, thus linking the congregations with a total membership of twelve hundred families, with the Conservative movement in America.

The splits and breaches in the religious life of the early Winnipeg Jewish community arose out of differences between eastern European traditionalists who were determined to establish an orthodox pattern of worship and western European liberal Jews who believed that Judaism in America must be modern and progressive. But in spite of these early differences and in spite of decisive steps in the direction of Reform Judaism, the Reform philosophy was never able to sink permanent roots in Winnipeg. The traditionalists superseded the small group of Reform Jews in numbers, in strength, and in intellectual vitality and they left their imprint on the religious life of the community. Consequently all of the synagogues in the city were more or less traditional and were defined by the degree of orthodoxy to which they subscribed, but there was always a large common fund of traditions to which they all adhered. Reform Judaism was regarded with suspicion and hostility and even today there is no Reform synagogue in Winnipeg. Even Conservative Judaism's acceptance here has been gradual.

In the early period of its settlement Jewish community life in western Canada was many years behind the community development of

American cities. Today the gap is almost bridged. A pertinent example is the growing trend shared by native-born Jews of Canada and the United States to affiliate with a modern synagogue. In Winnipeg many such young men and women came from Yiddishist, radical homes where religious beliefs and loyalties were once anathema.

A city which once seethed with religious and ideological differences, which was split and splintered both on small issues and on large and important principles, Winnipeg is today settling into a calm communal pattern of compatible and happy co-existence. Today an increasing number of young people, among them children of Orthodox Jews, of radicals, of non-conformists, of affirmants, and dissidents of all kinds, seek affiliation with Conservative synagogues to help them define the source and the nature of their Jewish identity and to reinforce it.

Chapter Seven

JEWISH EDUCATION

IN A PAPER on the subject of education which he read before the Manitoba Literary Society in 1895, the Rev. Dr. George Bryce of Manitoba College strongly endorsed the principle of secular public schools within a broad framework of cultural pluralism.

We want Mennonite and French-Canadian, and Icelander, and Jew, and German to remember their history, their language, and their religious customs, but most earnestly desire a common movement for the education, social and material development of all kinds of people, in Manitoba, irrespective of creed, or tongue or nationality. We would have unity in our diversity; diversity and freedom in our unity.¹

Dr. Bryce shared the majority view formulated by the Protestant population that a free secular education should be administered by the government and should be made available through a unified public school system. Still, he recognized that the ethnic composition of the province had engendered a flexible cultural atmosphere which allowed ethnic and religious groups to maintain their traditions and original loyalties.

Two decades earlier the French Catholics and the Anglicans, basing their claim on the Manitoba Act of 1870 and the Provincial School Act of 1871, demanded that the province support separate denominational schools. Accordingly a denominational school system was inaugurated which helped to preserve for a time the idea that education belonged under the jurisdiction of the church. Mennonites and Lutheran Icelanders, who brought with them a tradition of church-sponsored schools, accepted such an educational system naturally and received the additional privilege, also derived from the School Act, of instruction in their own language, a privilege which Ukrainians and Poles insisted upon in the 1890's and thereafter.

For Jewish settlers who were equally interested in assuring group survival the phenomenon of free public schools did not constitute a threat to their children's Jewish loyalties. Quite the contrary, it was a boon, the fulfilment of the expectation of equal educational opportunity within a democracy. In Russia and Poland where their children had been excluded from government schools the traditional Jewish

¹Full text of Dr. Bryce's paper to be found in Manitoba Provincial Archives.

love of learning became a hunger and a yearning for education in all forms. As for Jewish education, they accepted the principle that, as in the past, the task of transmitting to their youth the heritage of their fathers was the responsibility of the Jewish community. Before long, however, they were to discover that serious obstacles had to be overcome before a proper Jewish educational programme could be evolved.

I

To the immigrants of 1882 the concern for the Jewish education of their children was second in importance only to their search for a livelihood. S. F. Rodin, one of the immigrants, wrote from Winnipeg in September, 1882: "My heart is deeply grieved when I observe the increasingly impoverished spiritual state of our brethren. Our children wander about aimlessly and we find ourselves embarrassed in the eyes of Winnipeg inhabitants because of our inability to secure teachers to instruct them in a knowledge of our tradition. We are badly in need of a school for them."² Rodin wrote that he and his fellow immigrants were prepared to contribute from their very meagre earnings towards the establishment of a Hebrew School in Winnipeg and that he had written on behalf of his co-religionists in Winnipeg to the *American Hebrew* in New York City to ask for their advice and guidance. He concluded confidently, "Believe me when I suggest that it would be easy to cultivate here sturdy plants which could yield holy and praiseworthy fruits, bringing glory to our people."³

But many parents could not wait for a community school and proceeded to engage a private Hebrew instructor, a *melamed*, to teach their children a reading knowledge of Hebrew and the Bible. During the late afternoons and early evenings and on weekends the *melamed* came to immigrant homes and instructed his young charges around the kitchen table. In Winnipeg Rev. Abraham Benjamin, who came in 1881, was the first such *melamed*. Like other teachers he could hardly support his family from this source and to augment his earnings, Mrs. Benjamin ran a small confectionery shop for a time. During the next few years several men became peripatetic Hebrew instructors, among them A. Alperen and C. Risky, but none of these remained long in that profession. They soon learned that "it was easier to sell cloth to a farmer than the *Aleph Bet* to the children."⁴ It was evident, too, that homes were hardly conducive to proper Hebrew instruction. Homes were crowded, mothers were harassed and

²Hamelitz, St. Petersburg, Russia, no. 43, 1882.

⁴From an interview with Mordecai Weidman.

³Ibid.

irritable, small children ran about; it was altogether an unsuitable setting for study. Moreover the difficult financial circumstances of families drove children to look for after-school jobs as news-hawkers, boot-blacks, and messenger boys. Frequently the Hebrew teacher arrived for a lesson and found no student. Even the most conscientious *melamed* lost patience and despaired of achieving anything. A Winnipeg man whose family settled here in the 1880's said of his early Hebrew teachers, "Naturally they gave us lickings. What else could they do under the circumstances? We, in turn, got even with the teacher by disappearing. It was an all-around unhappy situation."⁵ Some progress was made in Jewish education in Winnipeg when Rev. J. Friedman established the first *cheder* in 1884 in a rented room in the Montreal block at the corner of Main and Logan Street. He began with an enrolment of twelve students.⁶ During the next few years the *cheder* grew and attracted larger numbers of students. The curriculum consisted of prayer and Bible studies, the language of instruction being Yiddish. In the meantime, another religious school had been opened in 1883 by the English-speaking leaders of Beth El Congregation. They established a Sabbath School staffed by several volunteer teachers, Philip Brown, Mrs. George Frankfurter, Louis Vineberg, and Miss Millie Brown. The Bible and Jewish history were taught in English to a group of fifty students of varying ages and several classes were required to accommodate them.⁷ The school was well organized and formally conducted; examinations were given at regular intervals and attendance was carefully supervised. At the completion of its third year it was reported in the press:

The third annual examination of the Sabbath School of the Beth El (Hebrew) Congregation was held on Sunday afternoon in the synagogue on King Street. There was a good attendance of members and friends of the school, and strangers. Mr. P. Brown, Superintendent of the school and President of the congregation occupied the chair. Mr. D. McIntyre, Inspector of the city schools, and Mr. C. D. Anderson conducted the examinations, and assisted in distributing the medals and prizes to the successful competitors, after the questions proposed had been answered in a very satisfactory manner.⁸

Within several years, although there were less than five hundred Jewish residents in Winnipeg, two Jewish school systems, differing utterly in form and in curriculum, were established in the city. The *cheder*, a transplant from Europe, served the children of the eastern

⁵From an interview with William Rosenzweig.

⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, June 2, 1884.

⁷From an interview with Edgar Frankfurter.

⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, March 15, 1887.

European immigrants, and the Sabbath School, an American development, was the form of schooling sought by the English-speaking residents who had come before 1882. Nor did the *melamed* disappear from the Winnipeg scene. All three forms continued to exist side by side for many years, but none of them was adequate to the task of conveying their extensive Jewish religious heritage to the Jewish children.

II

As the Jewish community became more firmly established economically, and as better co-ordination between congregations developed, serious attempts were made to improve the inadequate facilities of the *cheder* and the Sabbath School. Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, successor to Beth El, turned its earnest attention to intensifying its school programme when in 1891 its leaders engaged Marcus Tessler, a recent arrival from Russia, to serve as a full-time teacher together with their rabbi, Rev. Max Levin. Tessler, a learned young man who had a fine Hebrew and general education, conducted two daily classes which had a total enrolment of thirty-nine boys and girls. The monthly tuition per student was seventy-five cents and the teacher's salary was fifteen dollars. Tessler had a winning manner with the students and utilized attractive techniques to make his subject matter interesting and appealing.⁹ Under his guidance the Shaarey Zedek Hebrew School thrived and there were confident expectations that it would develop into a creditable educational institution. Unfortunately this progress was halted when Marcus Tessler decided after two years to leave for the United States where he studied briefly at Hebrew Union College in preparation for the Reform rabbinate. He finally entered medicine and became a prominent physician in St. Paul where he served as president of Mt. Zion Reform Congregation.¹⁰ In a way, Tessler's experiences presaged the careers of other Hebrew teachers who taught for a few years and then entered the fields of law and medicine. The failure of the community to pay Hebrew teachers adequately or to accord them respect and status discouraged qualified young men from remaining permanently in the Hebrew teaching profession and motivated them to prepare for work which commanded a higher salary and greater prestige.

For five years after Tessler's departure, in 1893, the Shaarey Zedek Hebrew School floundered, teachers came and went, sufficient finan-

⁹From an interview with M. J. Finkelstein whose father, Joseph, was largely instrumental in bringing Tessler over from Europe to teach at Shaarey Zedek.

¹⁰*Reform Advocate*, November 16, 1907.

cial support was lacking, and physical facilities were woefully inadequate. Classes were held in the synagogue lobby and the children suffered from the cold during the winter and lacked sunlight and air during the warm season. Meanwhile more and more children in the community required a Hebrew education. At congregational meetings parents complained and demanded of the synagogue leaders that they spend more of their time, and more of the synagogue funds on the development of education. Usually the retort was that "the Talmud Torah was injuring the congregation financially." At one meeting after the other the minutes concluded with the summary "but no results were arrived at."¹¹

Fortunately, at the turn of the century, one intelligent layman began to devote his efforts and energies to Jewish education. He was H. L. Weidman, a respected Shaarey Zedek leader, who advocated that a professional pedagogue be engaged to serve as principal of the Hebrew School. Weidman envisaged a *bona fide* Talmud Torah of the type that was being developed in large cities of the United States. He proposed that the school should be established as a communal institution and should welcome all Jewish children, whether or not their parents were able to pay tuition. At a meeting convened by Shaarey Zedek in December, 1900, for the express purpose of discussing his proposals, Weidman urged the immediate establishment of an efficiently organized Talmud Torah with a qualified teaching staff and adequate physical facilities. He recommended that a school building be erected on the lot adjoining Shaarey Zedek Synagogue at King and Common Streets, in which structure should be included several school rooms, meeting rooms, and a large assembly hall. At the same meeting a subscription was immediately taken up for the new school and H. L. Weidman was instructed to engage a principal at a monthly salary of forty dollars.

Through advertisements in the New York *Yiddishes Tageblatt*, a number of applications were received and of these the application of Rev. Nachman Heller was approved. In January, 1901, he assumed his duties as principal and teacher of a student body of forty boys and girls. Interviewed by the local press shortly after his arrival in Winnipeg, Rev. Heller announced ambitious plans for the Hebrew School, among them the engagement of a staff "sufficiently large and competent to meet the requirements of the school" as it grew.¹² Rev. Heller informed the newspaper that he had already translated "God Save the

¹¹Shaarey Zedek Congregation, Minutes, 1895-1899.

¹²Manitoba Free Press, January 3, 1901.

Queen" into Hebrew and had taught the anthem in translation to the students. By July, 1902, the student body numbered one hundred. Formal public examinations were administered by Rev. Heller, Tevel Finkelstein, Sinai Bere, and H. L. Weidman and were reported to have "resulted satisfactorily to parents and friends and very creditably to the pupils."¹³

By now plans for the new building were complete. Heller had succeeded in exciting the interest of the leaders of the Zionist Society who were eager to support the study of the Hebrew language and together with Shaarey Zedek leaders they undertook a campaign for the necessary funds. The cornerstone of the new Hebrew School, named Edward School after the British monarch, was laid on July 1, 1902. Manitoba's Lieutenant Governor, Sir Daniel H. McMillan, spoke during the ceremonies and said:

It was with great pleasure that I received this invitation to be present at this ceremony. I was gratified because many of the members of the Congregation Shaarey Zedek and the local Zionist Society are my personal friends, having come here when I did, years ago, when advantages were not so many and not so varied as now. They have won success, or have laid the foundations of success, and have become permanent fixtures in the upbuilding and maintaining of our public interests. I am glad to learn that this school, which I am informed is being built by voluntary subscription, is not to supersede our public schools in the education of the Jewish youth, but it is to supplement them. Our teaching must inspire and cultivate men, manly men, the boys of today who will be the statesmen of tomorrow. It is our duty to see that they are fitted to perform the tasks that await them.¹⁴

In November, 1902, the Edward School was completed. During the intervening months, however, Rev. Heller had accepted a post elsewhere and when the school opened its doors the staff consisted of Rev. V. Rosenbaum and Rev. A. Cohen. The curriculum included "courses in the Hebrew language, reading from the Scriptures and the Talmud as well as other Jewish literature, and history."¹⁵

Rabbi S. Roubin was appointed principal in July, 1903. An outstanding scholar who had contributed learned articles to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, he remained with Edward School for more than three years, when he left Winnipeg to take a post with Adath Jeshurun Congregation in Minneapolis.¹⁶ During Rabbi Roubin's incumbency the school had made considerable progress but with his departure in 1907 it came upon difficult times. A conflict developed between the

¹³*Ibid.*, July 3, 1902.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, November 22, 1902.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Reform Advocate*, November 16, 1907.

leaders of Shaarey Zedek and the Zionist Society over the matter of a successor to Rabbi Roubin. The Shaarey Zedek membership, too, split over the question of the qualifications which they should require of their principal. Some expected the next incumbent to be an outstanding cantor who could inspire the congregation in prayer; others would have settled for "less cantor and more teacher." The Zionists, of course, were interested in a scholarly man who was a good educator. Also, the Jewish population had been moving steadily across the C.P.R. tracks and was now concentrated in North Winnipeg. In a period of five years, since the construction of the school in 1902, the neighbourhood around Edward School was losing its Jewish residents and the continued existence of the school on that site was threatened.

With Rabbi Roubin's departure imminent, the Zionist Society broke with the Edward School and in 1906 established the B'nai Zion Synagogue and Hebrew School at the corner of Charles Street and Dufferin Avenue. They insisted upon the *Ivris B'Ivris* approach, namely, that all subject matter be taught not in English nor in Yiddish but in modern Hebrew, the living tongue of the Hebrew renaissance and of Zionism. The B'nai Zion Hebrew School with Jacob Pierce as its leading layman, engaged its own staff consisting of Messrs. Bruser, Kowalson, Phonim, and Sanderson.

By 1907 the B'nai Zion Hebrew School had outgrown its very modest quarters and the leadership found themselves unable to accommodate the rapidly growing Jewish school population. The Zionists decided to share the reins of administration with a board of community representatives whose responsibility it would be to devote its complete attention to Hebrew education. Thus, in 1907, the Winnipeg Hebrew School was born.

Chief Rabbi Israel Kahanovitch, recently arrived in the city, gave the project his blessing and called for community support for the Talmud Torah. An interested Jewry responded by electing the first Board of Directors with Abraham Berg as president, Jacob Pierce as vice-president, Abraham Milmet as treasurer, and Eli Cherniak as secretary. The Board purchased a building at the corner of Dufferin Avenue and Aikins Street where they installed one hundred and fifty students and the four teachers of the B'nai Zion Hebrew School. But before very long this structure, too, could not accommodate the ever growing numbers of children and board discussions as well as mass meetings over a period of three years were devoted to the consideration of a large and permanent Talmud Torah. The agitation for the project led by Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch and a group of lay leaders

gained support among all segments of the Jewish community until, at a public gathering held in Beth Jacob Synagogue on April 9, 1911, a resolution was adopted "to proceed immediately with devising ways and means to build a beautiful Talmud Torah."¹⁷ But no resolution could define these ways and means and it was no easy task to raise the funds for the purchase of a site and the construction of the building. Consequently, in September, 1911, R. S. Robinson who succeeded Abraham Berg as president of the Board of Directors, announced that building plans would have to be delayed until the spring of 1912 due to insufficient funds. The original estimate for the structure was twenty thousand dollars but when bids were opened the figure was double the amount. There was no choice but to postpone construction and the donors were assured by Robinson that their contributions would be kept safe, for the moment, in the bank.¹⁸

Spring, 1912, came and went but still the amount fell far short of the required goal. The construction of a new school seemed as remote as ever until Abraham Milmet announced in early summer that he would make a personal gift of five thousand dollars to the building fund. This magnificent contribution gave renewed stimulus to the campaign and by July, 1912, the Talmud Torah Board felt confident enough to proceed. A lot was purchased at the corner of Flora Avenue and Charles Street and the cornerstone laid on July 28, 1912. The *Free Press* reported the event:

Over 2,000 Hebrews assembled at the corner of Flora Avenue and Charles Street yesterday afternoon to witness the preliminary ceremonies of the laying of the foundation stone of the Winnipeg Hebrew public school. The actual formality of laying the stone will take place later this week. The proceedings yesterday afternoon lasted four hours. The platform from which addresses were given, a large refreshment booth and every available piece of scaffolding were decorated with British flags, interspersed here and there with flags bearing the Hebrew emblem of the double triangle, with the word "Jerusalem" across the centre.

R. S. Robinson presided over the large gathering and Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch was the keynote speaker. He delivered a stirring address in Yiddish, in the course of which he reviewed briefly the history of the struggles and persecutions through which the Hebrew people had passed during the past 2,000 years. Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch contrasted their condition in the countries from which the members of

¹⁷H. E. Wilder, ed., *The 100th Anniversary Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Press, 1932).

¹⁸*Canadian Israelite*, September 29, 1911.

the audience had come, with the liberty and privileges enjoyed by them in Canada, and urged them to avoid the error which might tempt them to forget the faith and the traditions of the fathers. He exhorted them to remember that they were the Chosen People of God, and to do all in their power to preserve inviolate the language, the teachings, the ideals, and the aspirations of Judaism, to which they had clung with noble tenacity in adversity, so that they might show to the world the beauty of their religion in a place where material prosperity and other advantages surrounded them.

Following the Rabbi's address, bids were called for and persons subscribing the largest sums like Abraham Milmet had their names engraved upon the chief cornerstone, while to Messrs. A. Shragge, H. Steinkopf, B. Wilence, and H. Glesby went the honour of inscription on one of four companion stones.

The Winnipeg Hebrew Free School, completed in the spring of 1913, was without a doubt the most outstanding achievement of the Jewish community until that time. The structure contained classrooms, a library, a board room, two small meeting halls, and a large auditorium. This auditorium was for almost four decades the living heart of the community, the setting for conferences, meetings, weddings, lectures, bazaars. On Sabbaths and Holidays it served as a place of worship. In writing about this educational institution Moses Finkelstein said:

A peculiar feature of the meetings held in the Talmud Torah, worthy of mention, is that often a visitor will be gratified to find at the same time under the same roof a sombre charity board meeting down below, a fiery nationalistic gathering in an upstairs classroom, a caustic socialist assembly in an adjoining room and a delightful ball in the concert hall above.¹⁹

The Winnipeg Hebrew Free School soon gained an outstanding reputation as a Jewish educational institution. *Dos Yiddishe Folk*, a New York publication, carried an editorial in 1915 concerning Hebrew education in the United States and Canada, in which it was stated that the three Talmud Torahs which stood highest in standards and achievements were to be found in New York, in Boston, and in Winnipeg. The staff of the Winnipeg Talmud Torah consisted of fourteen teachers, men with unusually fine Hebrew backgrounds, among them several who, while teaching there, were students at the University of Manitoba and later entered the legal and medical professions. That these men were dedicated teachers is corroborated in the columns of

¹⁹*Reform Advocate*, Winnipeg Issue, 1914.

the *Canadian Israelite* where reports and articles concerning the Talmud Torah appeared frequently.

There was considerable ferment among both staff members and intelligent laymen about the administration of the Talmud Torah's programme. For example, shortly after the new building was opened, staff members and many laymen raised the question of who was responsible for the institution's curriculum, demanding that it not be vested with the Board of Directors but instead with "men who understood pedagogy, learned men who should be appointed immediately to devote their full attention to the education program."²⁰ This forthright demand brought about the creation of a Board of Education which devoted itself to questions of pedagogy. Another demonstration of the intense interest in the education programme was a protracted debate concerning the Hebrew pronunciation to be taught to the children. The teaching staff favoured the "Lithuanian" pronunciation, while many laymen of Winnipeg sought a continuation of their "Russian-Polish" pronunciation. The "Lithuanian," or *Kovno Yeshiva* dialect, as critics dubbed it, prevailed.²¹ Yet another issue that flared up intermittently was that of *Ivris B'Ivris*, Hebrew exclusively, or *Ivris B'Yiddish*, Hebrew and Yiddish. This problem resolved itself eventually when the Yiddish supporters established their separate school. However, the Talmud Torah continued to offer instruction in the Yiddish language as a separate course of study. The staunch exponents of *Ivris B'Ivris* respected the Yiddish language but it was their contention that the children were acquiring a spoken knowledge of that "mother tongue" in their homes. The differences between Zionism and traditional Judaism were also a matter of concern, as the teaching staff of the Talmud Torah consisted of both pronounced traditionalists and outspoken Zionists. This problem eventually resolved itself through an orientation towards Mizrachi Zionism at the Talmud Torah which integrated religion and nationalism in its philosophy.

As the Jewish community in Winnipeg grew even the large Talmud Torah structure proved inadequate to the needs of the population. As early as 1913 a branch of the school had to be established in the Adas Yeshurun Synagogue and it came to be known as the McGregor Street branch. And in 1919 the Talmud Torah extended its activities further to mid-Winnipeg and organized classes at the Dagmar Street branch in the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue building. The classroom facilities in the McGregor Street branch, housed in the Adas Yeshurun Syn-

²⁰*Canadian Israelite*, August 29, 1912.

²¹*Ibid.*, November 7, 1912.

gogue, were condemned by the City Health Department and in 1921 the Board of Directors of the Talmud Torah decided to erect a new building on the corner of Andrews Street and Magnus Avenue. By 1925 the total enrolment of the Talmud Torah was 800, 400 at the main building on Flora Avenue and Charles Street, 350 at the Magnus Street branch, and 50 at the Dagmar branch.

In 1944, after several years of exploration and in response to a growing feeling among Jewish pedagogues on this continent that Hebrew schools should intensify their educational programmes, Talmud Torah decided to launch a day school. Among parents, too, there were many who while they desired a maximum Hebrew education for their children wanted to avoid the double load which an after-school programme represented. Large numbers of these parents registered their children in the day school when it opened its doors in 1944, and the growing response was so overwhelming that by 1956 there was an enrolment of 400 boys and girls.

It was becoming increasingly obvious that the heavy shift of the Jewish population further north into North Winnipeg and West Kildonan would necessitate a move for the Talmud Torah. An active Parent-Teacher Association sparked a building campaign which was largely responsible for the construction of a modern one-storey structure at Matheson Avenue at Powers Street, finished in 1952 at a cost of \$350,000. Here the day school continued to grow amazingly and a programme of after-school and evening classes for 150 children progressed satisfactorily. An important and valuable development was Maimonides College, a school of advanced Jewish studies, established in 1950 through the efforts of the Talmud Torah Principal, Dr. Abraham Kravetz, Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox community. Large numbers of northenders who had moved south now demanded that the Talmud Torah open a school in the south end whose programme, patterned after its own, would be under the direct supervision of Dr. Kravetz. This demand led to the establishment of the Herzliah Academy in 1954, which by 1957 had an enrolment of 165 children in its day-school and after-school programmes.

III

Beginning in 1905, a new wave of immigration from eastern Europe brought a considerable number of Jewish intellectuals to the shores of Canada, men and women who had been part of the Yiddish and socialist-cultural movements in Russia. Their approach to Jewish

problems was revolutionary, their inquiries about the major premises around which Jewish life centred were critical and thoughtful, and their thoughtfulness created a healthy ferment in the Canadian communities to which they came. Ideologically they could be divided into two major camps with a variety of splinter groups. The Labour Zionists combined in their philosophy the tenets of Zionism, namely, a return of Jews to a homeland in Palestine, with a socialist orientation; that is, a redemption of Zion through the ideals of collective ownership, self-labour, and non-exploitation of man by fellow man. The Socialist-Territorialists or Bundists believed in Jewish cultural autonomy within a socialist state wherever such a condition was possible. The educational philosophy of both groups negated traditional Judaism and espoused a humanistic, secular set of values. With this as their frame of reference they aligned themselves as critics of the Talmud Torah's traditionalist curriculum and sought to establish a school which would transmit their two-fold ideology: loyalty to the Jewish people and identification with the struggle for socialism.

To pave the way for the establishment of such a school in Winnipeg they organized in 1912 the Yiddisher Yugend Farein whose membership consisted of Labour Zionists, Socialist-Territorialists, and some few Anarchists. At a meeting held by the Farein on January 2, 1912, a manifesto was formulated to define the principles of the school which this group was about to open:

Taking into consideration that Jewish education in America brings to an estrangement of our youth from the Yiddish language, from Yiddish literature, from our people for a variety of reasons and because this leads to a break between parents and children which in turn means the loss to our people of our youth,

Taking further into consideration that the current methods of Jewish education are not consonant with modern pedagogical methods which are close to hearts of progressive-minded Jews,

It is therefore resolved that a school be established where the coming generation will be reared in a progressive Jewish spirit.²²

By this time the Yiddisher Yugend Farein had affiliated with the Jewish Workingmen's Circle. This group rented a class room in the Aberdeen School on Salter Street and Flora Avenue and in May, 1914, it opened its first class in which seventeen students were enrolled. Synagogue leaders threatened that the Orthodox rabbis would excommunicate any parents whose children were students of the Jewish Radical School. Yet, in spite of this hostility, parents continued to

²²S. Belkin, *The Labor Zionist Movement in Canada* (Montreal, 1956), p. 245.

enrol their children in the school and before very long two teachers, B. Ginsburg and I. Hestrin, were engaged to instruct the growing student body. By 1915 ninety children were registered in the school, now re-named the I. L. Peretz School. A renovated building at MacKenzie Street and Pritchard Avenue was occupied and the staff was increased to a principal and three teachers. In addition to the regular classes for children, an evening adult education programme was initiated.

From the outset the coalition of the Labour Zionists, the Social Democrats, the Socialist-Territorialists, and the Anarchists hung in a fine balance and a growing discord among the supporters of the I. L. Peretz School over basic issues began to threaten the union. The diversity of their philosophies made it extremely difficult for them to formulate a unified approach to Jewish education. How could a nationalist-oriented programme be reconciled with the thinking of the internationalist Social Democrats or the anti-nationalist philosophy of the Anarchists? What of the emphasis of the Socialist-Territorialists exclusively on Yiddish as differentiated from the interests of the Labour Zionists in both Hebrew and Yiddish? These were some of the thorny issues which caused irreconcilable friction in I. L. Peretz School circles. In 1916 the Social Democrats broke with the school and opened a small school of their own, the Folks Shule, which was taken over by the Workingmen's Circle in 1920 and was renamed the Arbeiter Ring Shule. With the Social Democrats' departure from the I. L. Peretz School, the Labour Zionists, whose organizational existence had just been revived in 1916 after six years of quiescence, stepped into the breach and became vigorous co-workers of the Socialist-Territorialists in developing the I. L. Peretz School. At the end of the 1916 school term there was an enrolment of 185 students, of whom 127 were girls, 58 were boys. The disproportion of girls over boys was due to the absence of Hebrew in the curriculum which was considered a lack by parents who wished to have their sons prepared for the traditional *bar mitzvah* observance in the synagogue. As a concession to the Labour Zionists who favoured the Hebrew-Yiddish programme, the Hebrew language was introduced into the course of studies at the third-year level. In 1917, with this modification in curriculum the concern of parents about the preparation of their sons for *bar mitzvah* was allayed. As a result, there was a marked increase of male students in 1917 and the Socialist-Territorialists bowed reluctantly to the Hebrew language.

In 1917 the I. L. Peretz School moved into its own building at 412 Burrows Avenue. Two years later a group of women organized the Mutter Farein, the Mothers' Organization, and as their first project they opened a kindergarten. This undertaking was viewed with considerable skepticism by the men of the I. L. Peretz School who did not believe that it would succeed. In spite of these doubts the Mutter Farein continued to support the kindergarten and it did succeed. Strengthened in their confidence the Mutter Farein decided in 1920 to establish a day school for their first class of kindergarten graduates and in so doing they opened the first Yiddish day school on the American continent. The day school held its first graduation in 1925 at which time Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, a personality well-beloved in Winnipeg's Yiddishist circles, was the honoured guest.

The I. L. Peretz School progressed steadily until 1930 when because of ideological differences the Labour Zionists left the school to establish their own Folks Shule which they sponsored for the next fourteen years. Their curriculum differed from that of the I. L. Peretz School in that it gave greater emphasis to the Hebrew language as well as to Zionist content. In 1944 the Folks Shule reunited with the I. L. Peretz School and the name of the merged institution was changed to the I. L. Peretz Folks School. Recognizing the geographic change taking place in the Jewish community the I. L. Peretz Folks School built a modern structure on Aikins Street, near Inkster Boulevard, at the same time retaining its older structure on Aberdeen Avenue. In 1956 the school had an enrolment of 300 students in the day-school department and 250 students in the after-school programme. Without a doubt the I. L. Peretz had brought to Winnipeg a vigorous Yiddish folk-character. Those who supported it for more than forty years had the satisfaction of seeing large numbers of their own children, many of them prominent leaders in the community, continue to maintain a genuine interest in the school. Moreover, the tragic events in Europe during World War II as well as the achievement of a state in Israel had for the most part levelled the sharp ideological differences among the members of the older Yiddishist group. Their children who had been brought up in the I. L. Peretz School were interested primarily in preserving the Yiddish culture and Jewish values and believed that these they shared with other Jews of the community. All of them now had the common goal of transmitting the best of that culture and the most durable of those values to the next generation.

The Arbeiter Ring Shule which had come into being in 1920 had a career marked by great internal dissensions between the Marxists who had strong sympathies with Soviet Russia and those who were critics of the Soviets. The struggle was continuous and by 1926 the split became clear and the rightist element broke from the leftists within the Workingmen's Circle. Liberty Temple, the locale of the organization, was completely taken over by the leftists and they were successful, too, in gaining control of the school which they renamed the Sholem Aleichem Shule. The school in 1926 had an enrolment of some 175 students. Its philosophy, as set forth by the International Workers Order, was one which stated that "the past of the Jewish people is intimately bound up with our present interests; the history of the masses is our history. . . . We must acquaint the Jewish child with his people's past, bringing to light every position and significant element in Jewish history, and hand them over to the child as his historical inheritance." The Sholem Aleichem Shule supporters took their cue from the world Communist movement but after World War II there were increasing numbers who were disillusioned by the inconstancies and the vacillations of Communist policies. With such disenchantment there was a sharp decrease in Sholem Aleichem Shule support and enrolment and the school rapidly became isolated from the Jewish community.

Winnipeg's attainments in the field of Jewish education are singular in Canada and the United States. For the size of its Jewish population there are extraordinarily abundant and superior facilities for Jewish education which attest to the vigour and intensity of Jewish life in this city. Only an insignificantly small proportion of Jewish children in Winnipeg grow up without some form of Jewish education, whether in the traditional Talmud Torah, the Yiddishist I. L. Peretz Folks School, the left-wing Sholem Aleichem Shule, the Herzliah Academy, or in the two Conservative synagogue schools.

The day school grew steadily more popular in the Jewish community. Whereas in 1945 85 per cent of the 1100 students were enrolled in the after-school programmes and 15 per cent were in the day schools a phenomenal reverse pattern was discernible in 1958. The overwhelming percentage of students among the 1110 were now in the day schools where they received both their general and their Jewish education, with 80 per cent of the total number in the day schools and 20 per cent in the after-school programmes. Furthermore the Talmud Torah had extended its day school into high school. While still providing an after-school education programme in which

were enrolled some 1025 students, it was conceivable that the Shaarey Zedek and Rosh Pina congregational schools might eventually shift into day school programmes too. And, in 1960 Shaarey Zedek Congregation did open a day school department.

Without a doubt it can be said that the Jewish schools of Winnipeg have created a uniquely positive Jewish community in decades past and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

IF THE EARLY JEWISH IMMIGRANTS from eastern Europe came to Manitoba with little in the way of material goods, they were rich in the cultural predispositions and emotional commitments of their Jewish traditions. Conversely, the Jews from Alsace-Lorraine who came before 1882 brought with them not Jewish traditional values, but rather strong inclinations to acculturate freely to the environment. On the one hand, the forms of amusement and recreation which they found here were not alien to their outlook. On the other hand, the prospect of the emotional isolation which a tiny island of strangers must suffer if it does not merge with the predominant culture was frightening. Moreover, this prospect was entirely at odds with the ideal picture of the Jew as a full-fledged Canadian citizen enjoying equal civic and social equality.

It was not strange then that these first immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine should adopt the social mores of their neighbours enthusiastically and without reservation. Like church groups in the community, they planned picnics and outings, often joining in the excursions arranged for their members by mercantile organizations with which they were associated. To the usual games and competitions enjoyed during such outings, the Jewish settlement contributed eager participants and spectators.

Popular events in the general community were charity balls through which funds were subscribed for hospitals and other public causes. Emulating their non-Jewish neighbours the Alsace-Lorrainers introduced this social form to the Jewish community. In December, 1884, a Hanuccah Ball was held to raise money for a synagogue building and for the Winnipeg General Hospital.¹ Thereafter it was not uncommon that Hanuccah and Purim were marked by gala charity balls, in later years undertaken by the entire Jewish community.

A concept alien to Jews of eastern Europe was that of a regular vacation or a pleasure trip. This was not the case with the families from Alsace-Lorraine who, though in moderate circumstances, made provisions for occasional holiday trips to St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Chicago.

¹See *supra*, 75.

In the new world of Manitoba, the Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe found much that was strange to their spirit. Their heritage saw little worth in the muscular accomplishments of sports and physical achievement. They rather valued the satisfactions of learning and they found their joys in prayer and in the fulfilment of ceremonial observances, simple pleasures found within the well-defined areas of synagogue and home. Moreover, many were conditioned to poverty and sadness and looked upon their occasional joys as temporary reprieves from a lifetime of sorrow. Little wonder, then, that outright pleasure for its own sake was considered frivolous, trivial, and unbecoming.

But the next generation, whether born or nurtured in Manitoba, was naturally attracted to the vigorous, life-affirming pastimes which the environment offered. Rebelling against the outlook and the value judgments of their parents the young people became extraordinarily preoccupied with athletics and sports. This was one of many points of conflict that led to a growing social distance which separated the two generations, a distance that was rarely spanned and that frequently led to serious emotional dislocations within families.

I

W. J. Sisler, for many years the Principal of Strathcona School in the heart of Winnipeg's immigrant district exerted a strong influence upon children from eastern European families in the direction of integration.² He learned during his early contact with Ukrainian and German newcomers that these parents "thought the games would be hard on the players' boots; others wanted the boys to pile wood, dig the garden or run errands after four o'clock."³ But he discovered that Jewish parents were concerned with additional considerations when they resisted the school recreational programme. For example, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, was the important sports day at Strathcona School. Each Saturday morning a programme of baseball, lacrosse, and football was offered there. Jewish parents expected their children to attend Sabbath morning worship at the synagogue; they expected them to observe the commandment which forbade travel and labour on the Sabbath.

Sisler believed firmly in the idea that athletics "created good will among children of many racial and religious groups."⁴ He frequently

²From a personal interview with the late W. J. Sisler. See also W. J. Sisler, *Peaceful Invasion* (Winnipeg, 1944).

³Sisler, *Peaceful Invasion*, p. 40.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 35.

invited Jewish parents to his office to interpret to them the advantages of participation in sports. In presenting his point of view Sisler suggested that their children were willing to walk to and from school so as not to violate the Sabbath. Moreover, since soccer is played with the feet and not with the hands the game could not be interpreted as labour! In most instances Jewish parents accepted perforce the principal's arguments and "the boys developed into good players."⁵

Usually parents lost by default, that is to say, language and culture barriers robbed their arguments of cogency and silenced their defence of a systematic religious philosophy. Added to this, the authoritative symbol of principal and teacher called forth an awe and respect not to be openly challenged. Unwittingly, an educator rooted in the cultural pattern of his land contributed to the struggle between the generations in Jewish homes. Many a boy would go to the Sabbath morning service with his father and pray with half a heart, impatient to join the game in the schoolyard. During the Scroll-reading portion of the service he would stealthily run off to participate in the game with his schoolfriends.

Dr. S. H. Churchill, a Winnipeg dentist, who expressed the adjustment outlook of a first-generation Jewish youth, severely criticized the indifference of Jewish parents to their children's achievements in the sports field. He wrote:

When the Jewish boys play the game, play it fair and square, and at times better than anyone else, they should expect our support and encouragement. In this century of ours, are we so short-sighted as to lose the appreciation of the value of true sports and sportsmanship, and the infinite benefits it brings to young manhood and womanhood?⁶

To sponsor sports and social interests within a Jewish organizational framework was then the next step among young Jewish leaders who, like Dr. Churchill, accepted sports as a legitimate outlet for youth. Motivated by this goal one of their number, Mordecai Weidman, sought the advice of the Y.M.C.A. director who assisted him generously with guidance and equipment.⁷ Out of this grew the Young Hebrew Social Assembly Club, organized in 1895 with a three-fold programme, cultural, social, and athletic. This organization evolved into the Young Men's Hebrew Association. By 1899 the Y.M.H.A. had acquired a club room of its own in the McIntyre Building.⁸ The club sponsored lectures, dances, and occasional sports events.⁹

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶*Jewish Post*, December 18, 1925, p. 3.

⁷From an interview with the late Mordecai Weidman.

⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, November 4, 1899.

⁹*Ibid.*, February 14, 22, 1895.

Two decades passed before the Y.M.H.A. and its programme took firm roots in the community. Its early years were marked by spurts of enthusiasm followed by periods of decline. Between the years 1905 and 1919 its continuity was uncertain but beginning in 1919, when it acquired a permanent charter from the province, it attracted a substantial following and grew steadily. The organization moved from one rented locale to another until, in 1936, Max Steinkopf, prominent barrister and businessman, presented to the Y.M.H.A. the gift of a building at 91 Albert Street. This building became its first permanent home. At this time, too, a professional director and staff were engaged. The programme development paralleled a growing community appreciation for its activities on behalf of youth. Young people responding to the programme, looked to the Y.M.H.A. as their own centre where they could participate in athletics, social events, and debating.

By the late 1940's the quarters on Albert Street became wholly inadequate. The Jewish community was asked to contribute funds towards a large, modern structure in the heart of the city which would accommodate greater numbers and a programme of greater scope. Acquiescing to the need and reflecting a half century of change in community thinking, the Jews of Winnipeg supported the project enthusiastically so that by November, 1952, the building was dedicated and officially opened. The new facilities made possible a full and varied programme for the whole community, both the young and the old.

II

The traditional definition of the synagogue as it evolved historically was tri-faceted; it served as a House of Prayer, a House of Study, and a House of Assembly. For centuries every legitimate expression of Jewish life was included within the synagogue. For the early immigrants who could not foresee the cultural-social forms that would develop in the new land the original, all-embracing pattern could not be reproduced here in its entirety. Only a portion of that pattern was transplanted to the Canadian scene. The synagogue was established as a House of Prayer and for a limited group only as a House of Study. For this same limited group it served as a social centre. Regular *seudot mitzvah* (commandment meals) were held by such study circles at the conclusion of the Sabbath, on the Festival of the Rejoicing of the Law, and on the occasion of a *siyum* when the study of a Talmudic tractate was completed. Such meals were simple—herring, Sabbath-loaf, and beer being the common staples—and they were inevitably

accompanied by joyous singing of *zemirot* and *nigunim*, songs of the Sabbath and the Festivals.

But for the purposes of larger social assembly the early synagogue structures were small and inadequate and were unable to accommodate communal meetings and banquets. For example, the religious ceremonies attending weddings were solemnized in the synagogue but, perforce, the festivities which followed were taken into the halls of the city. And because the Jewish populace was still comparatively small and close enough to constitute one rejoicing family, such weddings became large affairs to which the entire family-community was invited. In writing about the weddings of the 1880's and 1890's, an early settler had this to say: "The great gatherings of the city consisted principally of wedding parties and they were great events, as the whole city would be invited to each wedding, all being known to each other and one could hardly afford to miss anybody."¹⁰ Large attendance at weddings is attested to by the fact that, at the nuptials of Miriam Ripstein and Isaac Rubenstein, the women's gallery of Shaarey Zedek synagogue collapsed under the excessive weight of the wedding guests.¹¹

III

Strangers in a new land, the Jewish immigrants, like other ethnic newcomers, early recognized the loneliness of their existence. As an antidote they sought friendship among their own kinfolk and townsmen. To begin with they met informally as old friends are wont to do. They looked for sympathy, they counselled one another, and they rejoiced together. Deriving mutual comfort and strength from these associations they began to organize into definite cells of *landsmanschaften*, *fareins*, and fraternal groups. In writing about such societies and groups in Winnipeg, which at their height numbered thirty-two, H. E. Wilder said:

The longing to continue the thread of existence, broken by immeasurable distance that separates them from their place of origin, the subconscious fear that something may happen to each of them if they should break away suddenly and forever, impelled them to provide for themselves a sort of resilient cushion that should soften the pain—were one to fall. . . .¹²

The fear of this "fall" led to an all-inclusive interdependence arising out of financial difficulties, illness, death, or the desire to bring family

¹⁰*Reform Advocate* (Winnipeg Issue), 1914. Reminiscences of Moses Finkelstein.

¹¹*Manitoba Free Press*, March 16, 1896.

¹²H. E. Wilder, ed., *The One Hundredth Anniversary Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Daily Press, 1932).

across from Europe. It could mean, too, the need to help brethren in the European hometown, victims of poverty, plague, pogrom—disaster in any form.

Between 1900 and 1903 there was a steady influx of Rumanian Jews into Manitoba, victims of upheaval and discrimination in their home country. Some of them became farmers; the larger number, however, were artisans who established themselves in Winnipeg. Among these Rumanian newcomers were young men who had already become "citized" in their homeland. In Rumania they had learned to enjoy the Jewish theatre, academic lectures, and the stimulus of politics and they had begun to affiliate with modern organizations. B. Abramovitch, a cultured man with considerable leadership ability, was the prime mover in bringing together his fellow countrymen in Winnipeg. In July, 1903, Abramovitch and his friends organized the Dr. Gaster Society for the purpose of "mutual help, but principally for the promotion of sociability."¹³ The society flourished for several years, until a few of its leaders began to exploit their affiliations to further personal political ambitions. As a result the society disintegrated, falling apart completely and irrevocably in 1906. Politics and sociability were obviously poor handmaidens.

A second society which was organized in 1906 took permanent roots in the community, perhaps because it did not become involved in civic politics. The idea for the creation of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society was born in the minds of three brothers who had come to Winnipeg from London, England, where they had spent several years while in transit to Canada from Russia. The brothers were Abe, Reuben, and Solomon Cohen, young men who, challenged by the need for friendship and mutual assistance, set out to develop an organization which would incorporate these aims. Reminiscing three decades later, one of the Cohen brothers wrote:

We were sitting in our room, one evening in October, 1906 at 506 Selkirk Avenue and we began to discuss the question of what to do on the long, cold, winter nights. We were lonely and there were many others like us who were equally forlorn. And then there came suddenly to us an idea! Why not get together the recent arrivals and organize a society in which we could find comradeship and simultaneously deal with some of our mutual problems?¹⁴

¹³Ibid. The Society was named after Dr. Moses Gaster, scholarly *chacham* of the Sephardic community in London, himself a native of Rumania. Officers of the Dr. Gaster Society, in addition to Abramovitch, were: J. J. Goodman, A. Singerman, H. Israelovitch, M. Elitzer, I. Moscovich, I. Midanick, P. Segal, N. Rosenblat, M. Haid, and H. E. Wilder.

¹⁴Abe Cohen in *ibid.*, Yiddish section, p. 58.

Each of the Cohen brothers contacted acquaintances and arranged for a founding meeting on October 31, 1906, at which time the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society became a reality. Annual dues for affiliation were set at eight dollars. To further augment their modest treasury the pioneer members of the Society sponsored a dramatic performance of *The Sale of Joseph* at Edward Hall¹⁵ which was so enthusiastically received that a second performance was presented shortly thereafter.

The Hebrew Sick Benefit Society grew to a membership of several hundred and participated in a variety of communal enterprises.¹⁶ They sponsored dramas and lectures; they conducted Holiday services for their membership; they acquired their own cemetery; they lent money to members in need; and they paid sick benefits. It was this society which set a pattern for the many societies that were organized in the years ahead. Like the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society each of them gave a genuine sense of status to their members. Wearing regalia which was part of the societies' rituals, marching in public demonstrations, participating in charitable endeavours, all of these activities added drama, warmth, a sense of belonging—in short, enhanced their lives.¹⁷

While the societies and *landsmanschaften* were attracting the immigrant newcomers, pioneer Jewish residents, whose mother tongue was now English, were attracted to the Independent Order B'nai B'rith. A fraternal order founded in the United States by German Jews, it was an influential organization devoted to philanthropy and political action for the protection of Jewish rights and had a far-flung membership throughout the United States and Canada.

In 1909 Max Steinkopf, Winnipeg's first Jewish lawyer, took the initiative and made contact with the B'nai B'rith Organization in the United States for the purpose of organizing a lodge in Winnipeg. Two

¹⁵Edward Hall was an annex built onto the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue at Henry and King Streets in 1902. For one decade until 1912, when Winnipeg's Talmud Torah was completed, Edward Hall was the Jewish centre for community activities which included a few young people's clubs, several adult clubs, and dramatic performances.

¹⁶In later years the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society sponsored the organization of a young men's branch which eventually (in 1931) broke off from the parent body and became the Hebrew Fraternal Lodge. Its membership is composed of men who have been born in Canada or who arrived as children. The Hebrew Fraternal Lodge has a total affiliation of seven hundred men and women. The Hebrew Sick Benefit Society has attracted European newcomers to its ranks but its over-all membership is diminishing with the demise of its original members.

¹⁷Societies and *landsmanschaften* that came into being were: Mohiliver Farein, Rumanian Society, Bessarabier Society, Pavolitcher Society, Nikolaiever Farein, Kiever Society, Propoisker Society, Austrian-Polish Farband, Bobrover Hilfsfarein, Hebrew Free Loan Society, Leno Zedek Society, Winnipeg Jewish Aid Society, Hebrew Friends Society, and Hebrew Fraternal Lodge. Most of these today find their ranks rapidly dwindling.

representatives of District Grand Lodge No. 6 in the United States were delegated to induct the first members of Winnipeg Lodge No. 650. On June 19, 1909, Rabbi S. N. Deinard and Mr. Sonnenschein initiated forty Winnipeggers "in the mysteries of the ritual." The pioneer membership consisted of long-time, financially successful citizens, respected men in the community-at-large.¹⁸ At its outset Lodge 650 strongly promoted a programme of social activities among its members. Unlike some of the American Lodges, the Winnipeg Lodge did not long maintain a policy of exclusiveness; rather it broadened its membership roster steadily so that by 1913 B'nai B'rith in Winnipeg had three hundred members.

In its programme the local lodge carried out tasks which were part of the international order's over-all platform. It carefully watched the press and theatre in their portrayal of the Jew. When unfair caricatures were found, or false insinuations suggested, in either of these media the lodge made representations and sought to prevent the recurrence of such negative stereotypes. The lodge aimed to stimulate the thinking of its brethren by arranging regular series of lectures on a variety of themes, among them: "Resolved That Organized Charity is Superior to Individual Charity," "Jews of Today," "The Problem of Indifference," and "Success and Character." Socials, parties, smokers, and picnics were sponsored frequently.

B'nai B'rith strove to enhance the status of Jews in the eyes of their neighbours. A unique contribution in this direction was the lodge's purchase of a hearse which did much "toward giving a more dignified appearance to Jewish funerals, which had been heretofore a matter of disgrace and derision."¹⁹ It worked devotedly to achieve a united charity effort in the community. In 1913 when there was considerable unemployment in Manitoba, the Winnipeg Lodge opened a free employment bureau which was instrumental in placing many Jewish unemployed in jobs. To serve the needs of underprivileged youngsters, it opened a fresh air camp on Lake Winnipeg in 1917. In 1944 B'nai B'rith established the Hillel Foundation for Jewish students at the University of Manitoba. B'nai B'rith has grown steadily until it is now composed of five separate lodges and three women's auxiliaries. In addition, it has sponsored an extensive B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and developed and maintained close ties with sister lodges in the United States and central Canada.

Young Jewish professional and businessmen desired a downtown club where they might gather informally at any free hour during

¹⁸*Reform Advocate* (Winnipeg Issue), 1914.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

the day and during evenings and week-ends. The businessmen's clubs already existing had a policy of exclusion and did not accept Jews because of religious bias. Jewish men then decided to organize their own men's club. The Montefiore Club acquired a clubroom in the McIntyre Block on Main Street near Portage Avenue and opened its doors in 1911. The five goals of the organization, as stated in its constitution, were these:

To afford Jewish young men of the City of Winnipeg an opportunity to get acquainted with each other, to know each other and to enable them to find congenial surroundings. The Club shall therefore at all times provide quarters where the members shall assemble. The quarters shall include a library containing wholesome literature, especially books and periodicals dealing with Jewish matters and the study of Judaism. It shall be the aim of the Club to promote healthful sports. The Club shall always have in view the promotion of social entertainments and intellectual advancement of its members.

In its early years the Montefiore Club developed into a social club with strong emphasis on athletic activities. Annual competitions were held for the membership in billiards, snowshoeing, golf, bowling, and football. When first organized the Montefiore Club restricted its roster to a limited number of members but the restriction was not long maintained and an open door policy prevailed. The club has contributed generously to philanthropic causes and during both World Wars the club's membership demonstrated their Canadian patriotism. In World War I, from among a membership of 65 young men, 30 volunteered for service in the Canadian Forces.

In the years following World War I there was a bumper growth of Jewish organizations for youth and adults. The home was losing its position as the centre of young people's social life and leisure time was being spent increasingly in group associations. The tendency to affiliate was strong; people joined one or more organizations, some for ideological motives, others for social reasons.

With the growth of the Jewish student body at the University of Manitoba, the Menorah Society was established by the students as a forum for the consideration of Jewish issues. Affiliated with the Intercollegiate Menorah Association which linked Jewish students on campuses across the United States and Canada, the Menorah Society consisted of serious young people who studied various aspects of Jewish life through seminars led by learned adults and mature students on campus. It welcomed to its midst faculty lecturers and visiting guests. Some of the subjects studied were the Bible, Jewish

literature, and Zionism. The Menorah Society annually presented dramas to large community audiences. With the proceeds realized from their 1925 play presentation, "It's Hard To Be A Jew" by Sholem Aleichem, they sponsored a trip to Palestine for Dr. Guthrie Perry, Professor of Bible and Hebrew at United College. Dr. Perry represented the University of Manitoba at the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1944 the Menorah Society was succeeded by B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation as the Jewish students organization.²⁰ Through B'nai B'rith support Hillel acquired permanent quarters where varied cultural and social programmes are carried on under the supervision of a permanent rabbi-director.

The scouting movement gained momentum in the Jewish community after 1915 and a number of Scout Troops, Cub Packs, and Girl Guide Companies became strong in several synagogues, in the Talmud Torah, and at the Jewish Orphanage. Max Steinkopf and Mrs. Max Heppner represented the community in their capacities as Commissioners. In 1922 two Jewish Boy Scouts, Benjamin Peters and Alexander Smith demonstrated unusual heroism in rescuing two children from a burning house and were singled out for Silver Cross Awards.

During the late 1930's, and throughout the next decade and one-half, four Zionist Youth Organizations flourished in Winnipeg. Young Judea, initiated in 1920, was followed by Habonim, Hashomer Hatzair, and Shomer Hadati; together they attracted to their ranks large numbers of youth who looked for identification with the vibrant Zionist cause. The programmes of all four groups were strongly *chalutz*-oriented, that is, they encouraged their membership to prepare themselves to pioneer in Palestine's collective settlements. With the tacit approval of the Yiddish and Hebrew schools on whose premises they met and from whose student bodies they drew their membership they introduced an extensive cultural programme which left an impress on its members and on the community for years to come. Their ideology was Zionist nationalism of varied shadings, their programme emphasized Hebrew culture, and their aim was Jewish survival through *chalutziut*. A number took agricultural training in Canada and made the attempt to settle in Palestine, but very few succeeded in integrating there. With the establishment of the State of Israel and with the departure for Israel of their adult leadership, all four organizations suffered a serious decline, and have now entirely disappeared.

²⁰The annual enrolment of Jewish students at the University of Manitoba and its affiliated colleges has been approximately five hundred.

IV

An important part of the lives of much of Winnipeg Jewry was the Yiddish drama which had a lively and illustrious career over four decades. For entire Jewish families throughout this period, it came to be a regular respite from work-laden weeks during the long and severe winters. Those who recall the glory of the Queen's Theatre of yester-year say that a night at the Queen's was a combination of a family picnic and a circus. A description out of the early period suggests the Shakespearean theatre pits of Elizabethan England.

In the Queen's it is common to hear soda-water bottles uncorked throughout the performance, usually at the most melodramatic points in the play. It is not at all unusual to hear peanut shells being cracked, apples being crunched. It just isn't nice! After all, not too long before curtain time people have had their full evening meal at home. Is it therefore necessary to pack large family baskets and to trundle them into the theatre?²¹

Jewish settlers were delighted with the Yiddish theatre and responded to it wholeheartedly. When they cried with the heroes of the melodramas, they cried for themselves and their own problems. The situations enacted before their eyes were like their own; thus externalized, they became less pressing and less painful. When they laughed uproariously at the antics in the comedies, they were able to forget, at least for a time, their own troubles. Actors and actresses became heroes and heroines whose personal lives were of deep interest to their audiences. Witty stage repartee was long remembered and the songs from popular shows were sung everywhere by young and old.

As early as October, 1895, the Winnipeg Jewish community was treated to professional Yiddish theatre when one Madame Annie of New York City, played a two-night stand at the Bijou Theatre. Madame Annie was the star and her two children the supporting actors of the Hebrew Operatic and Dramatic Society. The trio presented *Life in Egypt*, a piece described in the press as "a comic operetta." According to the newspaper, it was expected that the audience would include "a large turnout of Jewish and Gentile citizens, as a Hebrew opera is a novelty in the West."²² To attract a goodly attendance the advance notices announced that the children virtuosi would also present "a programme of specialties" in song and

²¹An editorial in the *Canadian Israelite*, November 17, 1911, p. 4.

²²*Manitoba Free Press*, October 15, 18, 1895.

dance. As no reviews of *Life in Egypt* appeared in print there is no indication as to how the two performances were received.

Yiddish drama had its permanent beginning in Winnipeg, in 1904, with the arrival of a semi-professional actor-director, Morris W. Triller. Born in Rumania and reared in the city of Bucharest, where Yiddish theatre had been flourishing for some years, Triller had had an opportunity to learn theatre craft under the great Yiddish playwright, Abraham Goldfadden. An electrician by trade, Triller was asked by Goldfadden to create and supervise the lighting effects for some of his plays. Inspired by Goldfadden and fascinated by the theatre, Triller looked for the opportunity to become a full-time actor. In 1899 he and his wife came to New York City. There he worked as an electrician doing lighting effects for Yiddish theatres from time to time. He would happily have abandoned his trade in favour of full-time theatre work, but his wife would not have it.

In 1903 Triller, with his wife's concurrence, decided to leave New York for Winnipeg. Here both of them had close relatives who had assured the couple that Triller could pursue his theatre avocation fully while earning a livelihood from his trade. This was the opportunity which he sought. Shortly after his arrival in Winnipeg he produced his first play, *Moshiach's Tzeiten* by Goldfadden, in which he played the leading role. It was received with tremendous enthusiasm, the proof being that the audience clamoured for more Yiddish drama. To supply this demand Triller organized the Jewish Operatic Company. In this project he was substantially aided by members of the Singerman family, Zena Shore, and A. Nussbaum around whom grew a larger permanent troupe. Among the dramas presented by the Jewish Operatic Company during the years which followed were *The Greenhorn*, *The Jewish Hamlet*, *The Jewish King Lear*, *Shulamith*, *Bar Kochba*, and *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. The bill was varied, drawing large audiences. It included tragedies, musical comedies, and variety shows.

As interest in Yiddish theatre grew, its creators and supporters determined to acquire a permanent home. The chief sponsors were Triller, Hyman Roller, Morris Waisman, and Ben Sheps, all of them members of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society which had earlier ventured into theatricals for money-making purposes. This group proposed in 1907 that the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society and the theatre backers jointly purchase St. Giles Church on Selkirk Avenue in the heart of the Jewish district. The proposal was accepted and the former church was purchased and converted into a theatre. This was

the famous Queen's Theatre which became a focal point for communal creative endeavour and remained so for more than 35 years.

The calibre of performances varied with the quality of the plays and with the degree of preparation. The serious work of the great Yiddish dramatists contained meaty roles which required experienced artists and much rehearsing. The local troupe could not offer such drama too often as it simply did not pay. The large mass of people were not too discriminating—they did not come to the theatre to see sensitive portrayals and interpretations of great dramas, but rather because they wanted a springboard for the expression of their broader emotions. When they came to laugh they were happy with crude musical comedies; when they wanted to cry they looked for pure melodrama.

The Jewish King Lear was the epitome in tragedy; viewing it spectators wept unabashedly. To the immigrants the message of this drama, the disloyalty of children, their callous indifference to parental sacrifices, was immensely meaningful. *The Jewish Hamlet* drastically adapted from the Shakespearean tragedy included Jewish religious ceremonials climaxed by the chanting of the *kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. Act IV of this Yiddish drama was described in the printed programme as the "great scene of the Jewish cemetery." On the burial ground there took place the "sad wedding of Vigder (Hamlet) and his dead bride Esther (Ophelia) according to the Jewish religion."

But a considerable number of the young Jewish intelligentsia in Winnipeg, who were conversant with the best in Yiddish literature, severely criticized the local Yiddish theatre. Many of them frequented the general theatre and were impressed by the standards of the English stage. An editorial written in 1911 by B. Goldstein in the pages of *Der Kanader Yid* conveys their thinking.

Many theatre-goers have established their dramatic tastes and criteria through the English stage presentations which they have seen at the local theatres. They therefore demand the same high standards for the Queen's Theatre which they have observed at the Walker Theatre. They want the baby in swaddling clothes to walk as dignifiedly and upright as the polished well-paid performers of the general stage.²³

Appreciating the local producers' dilemma the same editorial continues:

On the other hand a considerable portion of our Jewish population has not the high criteria of the intelligentsia. True, they, too, occasionally see English productions but these are the movies and vaudeville at the

²³*Der Kanader Yid*, November 17, 1911.

Empress Theatre and the quality of these is very questionable. These people do not seek heavy drama. They want to be entertained.²⁴

In a large city like New York, contended the editorial, the tastes and needs of the separate groups could be met through the several Yiddish theatres that existed. "Low-brow" vaudeville could be seen at the People's Theatre; "high-brow" plays could be enjoyed at the Liptzin Theatre. What was the solution for Winnipeg? The editorial proposed that the sophisticates should develop a greater tolerance of mass thinking while at the same time persisting in their demands for better drama. In time perhaps the tastes of vaudeville fans would mature.

The local intellectuals channelled their impatience constructively by organizing a competitive theatrical group, to offset the attraction of the Jewish Operatic Company. They established the Yiddish Dramatic Club, drawing upon their own talents for the stage plays which they produced.²⁵ By offering dramatic works of literary merit, well acted and tastefully produced, they succeeded in developing the taste of the Jewish public far beyond their original expectations. In time they created a genuine desire for the serious and legitimate dramas of Jacob Gordin, Peretz Hirshbein, Leon Kobrin, and David Pinsky. From time to time, too, they brought to Winnipeg the stars of the New York Yiddish stage, Jacob Adler, Mme. Kenny Liptzin, and Rudolph Schildkraut. The Queen's Theatre did indeed continue to feature inferior parodies and tasteless adaptations but this fare was balanced by works which satisfied more discerning minds. And so, gradually, the battle for better Yiddish theatre in Winnipeg was won.

From 1904 to the early 1940's Yiddish theatre was a vigorous part of Winnipeg's cultural and social life. It helped to develop the literary and cultural tastes of large numbers of people and it fostered a growing movement for amateur theatre. Today, while formal Yiddish drama is a closed chapter, stage plays on Jewish themes are not infrequent. Among the dramas produced in English have been Sholem Aleichem's *It's Hard to be a Jew* and Peretz Hirshbein's *Green Fields*. These have been presented by Jewish students at the University of Manitoba first under the auspices of Menorah Society, and later by the Hillel Dramatic Society. In 1947 the Hadassah Organization's Yiddish production, *Mazel Tov*, written and acted

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵The Yiddish Dramatic Club founders and actors were Ben Sheps, Hyman Roller, M. Cherashny, Bertha Prassow, Emma Kesselman, B. Tauman, Fanny Cherniak, J. A. Cherniak, A. Osovsky, Judith Osovsky, Max Rodin, S. Granovsky, R. Shaw, A. Shaw, and B. Miller.

by local talent, drew packed houses to the Playhouse Theatre for a full week of performances. Winnipeg's career in Yiddish drama has been intense and exciting.

Music held great charm and interest for Jewish immigrants in Manitoba. Their love for music had been born in the synagogues of eastern Europe where cantors interpreted the liturgy of the Sabbath and Holy Days through sweet and soul-stirring melodies. Transplanted, they were quick to respond to any form of Jewish music available to them. It was little wonder then that local cantors and synagogue choirs were much appreciated by their enthusiastic congregations. Outstanding among Winnipeg cantors was Moses Jacob who settled here in 1908. Jacob, who received his cantorial preparation as well as his formal musical training in Russia, brought with him an extensive repertoire of Hebrew and Yiddish music. Shortly after his arrival he organized his first synagogue choir and two years later he established the Winnipeg Jewish Folk Choir. Beginning in 1910 the Folk Choir presented regular concerts before large Jewish audiences. The choir which consisted of forty to eighty voices attracted large numbers of immigrant adults to its ranks. Many of their Canadian-born children came with them and stayed to sing. In this way native-born Jewish youth was introduced to the pleasures of Jewish music through the compositions of such outstanding European composers of liturgical and Yiddish folk music as Nissi Belzer, Zeidel Rovner, and Abraham Goldfadden. It is no surprise then that Winnipeg invited most of the world-renowned cantors to come as guest performers. They were usually accompanied by Cantor Jacob's choir and were received with much enthusiasm. Among them were Sirota, Rovner, Kwartin, Rosenblatt, Hershman, and Pinchik. Every Jewish home had its own collection of cantorial recordings and every Jew considered himself a *meyvin*, an expert on cantors and their repertoires. It would be accurate to say that during this period an entire generation of Jewish youth in Winnipeg became knowledgeable in Jewish cantorial and choral music.

A talented musician and composer who worked with Moses Jacob in later years was Cantor Benjamin Brownstone who succeeded Jacob as conductor of the Jewish Community Choir. Brownstone, in the *Ba-al Tefillah* classes which he conducted at the Winnipeg Talmud Torah, prepared dozens of young boys to lead synagogue prayer services. Some of these became cantors serving communities throughout the United States and Canada. At the Talmud Torah and the Peretz School he trained student choirs, leaving with countless students a life-long appreciation of Jewish song.

For many years, too, there was a growing interest in the Jewish community in the development of an orchestra. Professor Jascha Resnitzky, a graduate of the Petrograd Conservatory, fostered the idea from the time of his arrival in Winnipeg in 1926. In 1945, after two decades of teaching instrumental music, Resnitzky was able to form the Jewish Community Orchestra with some of his own students. In this effort he was greatly assisted by Jack Steinberg, amateur violinist and community worker. In 1946 the Jewish Community Choir and the Jewish Community Orchestra presented the first of their annual concerts. The Jewish Musical Club was organized in 1945 to aid and to sponsor the work of both the orchestra and the choir. The Jewish Women's Musical Club was organized by Mrs. J. J. Lander in 1948 to promote creative self-expression in music and the arts among Jewish women. It carries on an elaborate programme in the fields of music, drama, and dance; it holds studio concerts where amateur talent is featured; and it sponsors and helps support gifted, young Jewish musicians.

V

As members of a highly literate people for whom it was as important to analyse and to interpret as it was to know the facts, the Jews of Manitoba early desired a press of their own. Here was a singular group of people. Talmudic learning had left them a fund of experience in deductive reasoning; allegory, myth, humour, and pathos were part of their cultural heritage; they were introspective, critical, and articulate. How could such people stay out of print for long? Indeed there was a very real need for a Yiddish newspaper in Manitoba to provide information about world events and about affairs in the Jewish world, to tell of newsworthy local occurrences, to forge a chain of communication with the old world, to guide, to interpret, to exhort, and to teach. And what of the simple and fundamental function to supply reading material? What better medium than the Yiddish press for Yiddish literature as well as romantic novels, poetry, advice to the lovelorn, news, and views?

As early as 1894 the establishment of a Yiddish newspaper was given passing thought. According to a news report a Yiddish newspaper, *Die Hagodeh*, had begun publication in Minneapolis and it was expected "that a Hebrew paper may soon be started in Winnipeg."²⁶ Nothing came of this fleeting hope. Again in 1906 a Yiddish

²⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, April 30, 1894.

newspaper was spoken of as a possibility when Joseph J. Goodman, a professional journalist, interested a group of Jewish businessmen in backing a weekly periodical for central and western Canada. Goodman, whose column "The Jewish World" appeared regularly in the *Free Press* under the nom de plume, Professor Incognitow, saw the need for a Yiddish newspaper. An advance release reported:

A new weekly publication will next week make its appearance in Winnipeg, to be known as *The Echo*. Its pages will be devoted entirely to the interests of the Jewish population of western Canada and will be printed in Yiddish, the language of the Jews of East European origin. *The Echo* or *Wiederclang*, as it will appear in Yiddish, will make its bow to the public as an entirely independent and politically non-partisan publication. . . . Its advent is being awaited with interest by the Jewish public. The first issue will appear on the 11th of the present month.²⁷

The *Echo* appeared for several months after March, 1906, but when the officers of the Hebrew Echo Publishing Company called for the financial support from its shareholders and failed to receive it the *Echo* folded permanently.²⁸

The next Yiddish newspaper venture was undertaken in 1910 when in March of that year the Jewish socialists of Winnipeg under the leadership of Charles Salzman began to publish the *Winnipeg Courier*.²⁹ It was a pamphlet rather than a newspaper, devoted to articles on socialism. The modest four-pager campaigned vigorously for socialist candidates in local elections and its attack on the Jewish Liberal candidate for the Manitoba legislature, S. Hart Green, was vitriolic. To offset the *Courier's* campaign during the 1910 political battle, several supporters of Green published a Yiddish pamphlet, the *Free Voice* (*Die Freie Shtimme*). But with the end of the campaign both publications passed from the scene.

Heartened by the victory of their candidate and eager to further Liberal support in the Jewish community the backers of the *Free Voice* were more than ever determined to establish a permanent Yiddish organ in Manitoba. A. Osovsky, a community leader, reorganized the backers of the *Free Voice* in 1910 and succeeded in engaging

²⁷*Ibid.*, March 9, 1906.

²⁸*Ibid.*, July 16, 1906. Officers of the Hebrew Echo Publishing Company were David Balcovske, Morris Haid, and Leon Abramovitch. All of these men were staunch Liberals and it is conceivable that the *Echo* was intended to gain support in the Jewish community for the Liberal party. Philip Haid, son of the late Morris Haid, recalls that as a child he and the other Haid children played with type in the basement of the family residence, left over from the *Echo* venture. He believes that the Yiddish (or Hebrew) type was later sold to the *Canadian Israelite*.

²⁹Sponsors of the *Winnipeg Courier* were A. Sussman, Morris Waisman, M. Alcin, L. Orlikow, B. Taubman, and L. Schachter.

a full-time editor, Baruch Goldstein of Montreal.³⁰ In September, 1910, the *Canadian Israelite* (*Der Kanader Yid*) made its appearance. Goldstein, the editor, a fiery and independent spirit, demanded that the *Canadian Israelite* serve the Jewish community as a newspaper free of political ties. As a result the Liberals in the sponsoring group quickly withdrew their financial support. Had it not been for the non-partisan interest of Ben Sheps this newspaper, too, would have failed. Sheps, who believed that a newspaper should serve first and foremost as a cultural forum, carried on a vigorous campaign for mass support and he, in particular, is responsible for its early survival. Goldstein established high journalistic and literary standards for the *Canadian Israelite*. In 1914 it converted from a weekly to a daily becoming, at that time, the only Yiddish daily in Canada. In that year, too, Frank Simkin became its publisher and he steered the paper to a position of unusual influence in western Canada. Two outstanding editors, H. E. Wilder and S. M. Selchen, succeeded Goldstein, each of them bringing lustre to the *Canadian Israelite*, later re-named the *Israelite Press* (*Dos Yiddishe Vort*).³¹

The *Canadian Israelite* was a powerful influence in moulding Jewish opinion in Manitoba and western Canada. Its editorial horizon was broad; its columns included good literature, poetry, topical *feuilletons*, and up-to-date news coverage. It had many correspondents in the cities and towns of the prairies; and it encouraged amateur literary talents by printing the works of its readers. The *Canadian Israelite* supported the interests of its wide readership and came to be accepted as representative of Jewish opinion by both local and national leaders. It spoke boldly, at all times the advocate of Jewish rights, the champion of creative Jewish life on the Canadian scene.

Independent in Canadian politics it never became the narrow political organ which might have catered to the whims of a particular clique in the community. At an early stage in its existence it shook itself free of incipient parochialism. In 1912, two years after the *Canadian Israelite* came into existence, Goldstein, the editor, scathingly denounced a group whom he labelled "the South End Yahudim" and charged them with attempting to make his paper into their political mouthpiece.

They would assume themselves to be the real leaders, these South-Enders, and they would want the North-Enders to be their sheep. But,

³⁰The committee consisted of Joseph Finkelstein, Moses Abrahamson, H. E. Wilder, J. A. Cherninak, and Ben Sheps.

³¹Noah Witman became publisher-owner of the *Israelite Press* in 1954.

lo, the North End Jews are independent and vocal and know their own minds. The South-Enders would seek to steal this Yiddish newspaper from under the North-Enders but this editor will never, never permit such a heinous crime. Let the North End Jewish community now demonstrate its feelings and strength.⁸²

In the same issue of the paper a large advertisement appeared in which an appeal was made for more subscribers who would guarantee the paper's continued existence. Such a group could make the paper independent of the financial support of a small, affluent circle. To increase its subscribers' list the advertisement offered a prospectus of future articles, including:

1. Life of Jews in Galicia—N. H. Imber
2. Correspondence from Palestine—Zerubavel
3. Articles on Jewish Events in the U.S.—Dr. Boruchovitz
4. Correspondence From Russia—Dr. S. Smukler
5. The Jews in Germany—A. M. Gantzer
6. Correspondence From Calgary, Edmonton, Hirsch Colony, Estevan and Edenbridge
7. Reports From Montreal—B. G. Sack
8. Stories by Sholem Aleichem, Moshe Nadir, Mordecai Danzis, Hillel Zeitlin and Abraham Goldberg
9. Winnipeg Writings by A. Osovsky, Prassow Brothers, Y. Sklover and others.⁸³

A large number of readers responded to the appeal and with this renewed financial support the *Canadian Israelite* was able to continue as a free and independent newspaper.

But while it steered a fully independent course in politics, the paper never hesitated to speak its mind on all political issues as they arose. It urged strongly that the Jews exercise their voting franchise. In advance of election day in December, 1912, an editorial said:

Every citizen is blessed in this land with the privilege to elect its government. To achieve this opportunity much blood was shed. While once there were oligarchies and monarchies it is no longer in this country. As a newspaper we are neutral in politics but we are very eager to see that every Jewish citizen casts his ballot.⁸⁴

In the same edition, in an article by Y. Sklover, Jews were warned to steer clear of "cheap politicians who would wish to exploit the voters." The article goes on:

Let not the politicians promise the candidates the Jewish vote. There is no such bloc vote available. We are equal citizens with our neighbors,

⁸²*Canadian Israelite*, May 9, 1912, p. 2.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, December 7, 1911, p. 4.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 3.

free to choose without dictation. It would be worthwhile perhaps to create in the community a non-partisan voter's league to combat this evil.³⁵

Hewing consistently to the non-partisan approach, the *Canadian Israelite* gave equal treatment to the various political parties, allowing space within its columns at all times to all points of view.

This was the case, too, in the cultural arena. In Winnipeg, beginning about 1906, the community was becoming clearly divided between the Hebraist and the Yiddish elements. The Hebraists consisted of the religious traditionalists and ardent Zionists while the Yiddishist group consisted, in the main, of the anti-religious socialists. It would have been understandable if the *Canadian Israelite*, a champion of Yiddish, had leaned strongly in the direction of the Yiddishist socialists. And, yet, this did not happen. Through its columns and its editorials it championed Hebrew and Yiddish endeavour in culture and education with equal fervour. In 1911 when Winnipeg's Talmud Torah was carrying on its campaign for a new structure the *Canadian Israelite* vigorously supported the local Hebraists with a steady flow of editorials. When, in turn, the Yiddishist-socialists began their undertaking of a Yiddish school, the paper offered them unstinting support. It endorsed and encouraged all worthy community enterprises. It was indeed a genuine tribunal of the people.

The *Canadian Israelite* fought hard against all manifestations of anti-Semitism by urging Jews to stand up unequivocally for their rights. When the *Canadian Israelite* noted a considerable increase of abusive unfavourable stereotypes in Canadian publications it alerted its readers to protest such prejudiced representations. When Mr. Nickle, a member of the Dominion Parliament from Kingston, Ontario, brought before Parliament a bill to bar Jews from serving on the academic staff or the board of trustees at Queen's University the paper stimulated vigorous protests in the community, bringing about public mass meetings where Jews could express their dismay and dissatisfaction. In 1912 a blood libel case became an issue in Czarist Russia. The *Canadian Israelite* staff took the initiative to gain non-Jewish support for a petition protesting this baseless, mediaeval charge. In response to this campaign the Winnipeg Ministerial Association asked its members to denounce the blood libel from their pulpits in Winnipeg churches.

The role of the *Canadian Israelite* was a dynamic one; it helped make Jewish immigrants into alert Canadian Jews, broad in outlook,

³⁵Ibid., p. 5.

bold in action. In 1920, the forward-looking publisher and editors of the what was now the *Israelite Press* decided to issue an Anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Guardian*, edited by H. E. Wilder. After an experiment of six months, the management decided that "the field was too limited, and thus too heavy a burden was being imposed on advertisers."³⁶ The publishers felt strongly that the *Israelite Press* should give fullest and unqualified support "to the intensive cultural activity carried on in the Yiddish language and to the efforts to maintain and increase interest in Jewish literature." Their faith in the continuity of a Yiddish readership being strong, they believed that all creative energies should be channelled undivided in that direction.³⁷

But there was no denying that there was an ever growing number of Jewish men and women in the community who had grown up in this country and who read English more fluently than they did Yiddish. This group constituted an eager readership for an Anglo-Jewish publication. In 1925 Ben M. Cohen, a former member of the *Israelite Press* staff, established the *Jewish Post*, a weekly newspaper staffed by several students of the University of Manitoba. The *Jewish Post* began to reach a growing number of subscribers. In 1927 another Anglo-Jewish weekly, the *Western Jewish News* was established by Sam Berg. In spite of discouraging predictions about the possibility of their survival for any length of time, all three Jewish newspapers have for many years maintained good circulations and steady and interested readers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

The social and cultural life of the Jewish community of Winnipeg has been constantly rich and variegated. People isolated by distance from larger centres of Jewish life who sought to identify with a particular kind of Jewishness, no matter what its ideology or colouration, provided their own avenues for identification and in so doing they found a satisfying arena for their social and intellectual creative talents.

³⁶Wilder, ed., *The 100th Anniversary Souvenir*, p. 36.

³⁷Ephemeral attempts at Yiddish newspapers, in addition to those mentioned in the chapter, included *The Jewish People (Dos Folk)*—1912, *The Jewish World (Kanader Yiddishe Velt)*—1915, and *The Jewish Voice (Die Yiddishe Shtimme)*—1921.

Chapter Nine

PHILANTHROPY AND BROTHERHOOD

JAMES S. WOODSWORTH, who became the leader of Canada's C.C.F. party, in writing about philanthropy among Jews, said "they are most generous in helping one another. There are few Jewish applicants for public charity. They care for their poor through their own charitable organizations."¹ Woodsworth was writing from his vantage point as superintendent of the All People's Mission which was located in the heart of Winnipeg's Jewish quarter. As a knowledgeable Methodist clergyman he could have reported, too, that philanthropy held an honourable position among the Jews from ancient days. Jews had always felt responsible for their own and were capable of great acts of charity. The record of Manitoba Jewry proved to be consonant with this ancient tradition.

I

The necessity to assist the Russian-Jewish refugees who arrived in Winnipeg in May, 1882, led to the creation of the first relief organization among Jews in western Canada. This was a make-shift Jewish Relief Committee consisting of the entire pioneer Manitoba Jewish community, strengthened by the generosity of various gentiles who came forward with gifts of funds, food, and clothing to assist the impoverished immigrants.² Considering the urgency of the situation and the very small size of the Jewish community, the work carried out by the relief committee was indeed outstanding. Thirty-three Jewish families, one hundred people, in all, themselves but recently arrived and in moderate financial circumstances, welcomed and absorbed three hundred and forty refugees, a group three and one-half times its own size, within one year. This amazing achievement was due, in no small part, to the wholehearted response of many good Christians in the province.³

The emergency over, Jewish leaders recognized the need for a per-

¹James S. Woodsworth, *Strangers within Our Gates* (Toronto, 1909), p. 156.

²Leaders in the work of the Jewish Relief Committee were Philip Brown, Mr. and Mrs. George Frankfurter, Louis Wertheim, and C. E. Hamilton of the Manitoba and North-West Railway Company.

³*Manitoba Free Press*, June 1, 3, 5, 1882.

manent, formal, charitable organization to serve Jewish needs. In 1884 the first attempt to create such an organization was made when eighteen men split off from the one existing synagogue and gathered together to form the Montefiore Hebrew Benevolent Society. Its programme was twofold: to erect a Reform house of worship, where services would be conducted along less traditional lines and "to assist deserving objects of charity."⁴ This society established regular services of worship and, through the medium of their congregation to which they gave the name Beth El, they raised funds from time to time for charitable purposes. But the Montefiore Hebrew Benevolent Society was unsuccessful in attracting the participation of the Russian-Jewish group.

The eastern European Jews, most of them newcomers and traditional in matters of religion and ritual, looked with suspicion at the *Deutsche Yahudim*, the German Jews, of the society. Eager to retain their autonomy in all community affairs, they consolidated their synagogue under the name of Congregation Sons of Israel and added to its regular religious function the additional one of dispensing charity. As a result of the diverse social and religious delineations already evident in the Winnipeg Jewish community of 1884, two separate charity organizations were created in a single year to serve the Jews of the region. However, after two years (1884–6) of divided effort both factions realized that through their separate and overlapping endeavours they were ineffective in meeting their growing charity needs. They consequently merged their interests into a single organization, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, which for the next fifteen years carried on a united charity programme.

Its hand strengthened through unity, the society gave attention to five areas of need. It gave frequent assistance to local Jewish families in want. It sent contributions at regular intervals to the Winnipeg General Hospital; in March, 1887, for example, during a community-wide, fund-raising campaign to wipe out the General Hospital debt, the society contributed one hundred dollars.⁵ The society responded to requests for help from the Jewish farm settlements, first from Moosomin, Assiniboia, to which they sent food, fuel, and clothing, and still later from the Hirsch colony at Oxbow, Assiniboia, which was then in its early and precarious stages. So hard-pressed were the Hirsch colonists that before long the society's modest funds were depleted. Continuing its role as a relief organization, the society sent a letter of appeal to readers of the New York Yiddish newspaper, the *Tageblatt*, in January, 1894, in which they described the desperate plight of the

⁴Ibid., April 29, 1884.

⁵Ibid., March 29, 1887.

Jewish farmers. In response to this appeal, the sum of over one hundred dollars was contributed by *Tageblatt* readers who remitted to the fund from as distant a place as Paris, Texas. The fourth area in which the Hebrew Benevolent Society worked was in the assistance of destitute Jewish families who wished to migrate to cities in the United States "where they would find a haven among the wealthier and more numerous Jewish communities."⁶ Its fifth area of effort was that of job placement for newcomers to Manitoba. Thus, in the fall of 1891, through negotiations with Mennonite farmers in southern Manitoba, the society was able to secure harvesting jobs for one hundred and twenty men who utilized their earnings to tide them over until they found permanent jobs.⁷

In summary, then, the Hebrew Benevolent Society (1884–1909) served the following needs: (1) relief to local needy families; (2) assistance to general community causes; (3) relief to Jewish farmers in the West; (4) railway fares for families seeking re-settlement; and (5) job placement for newly-arrived immigrants. The society's funds, raised primarily through local projects—individual contributions, dances, socials, picnics—were, on occasion, augmented by funds from the outside, as in the instance of the *Tageblatt* appeal.⁸

By 1893 the membership of the two synagogues, Beth El and Sons of Israel, had realigned their allegiances and had grouped themselves into two new congregations, Shaarey Zedek (1890) and Rosh Pina (1893). A new feature of these reconstituted groups was the creation of Ladies' Aid societies, composed of the wives of synagogue members, whose primary function was to raise funds for local charitable purposes. This was the first instance of Jewish women's groups being active in communal endeavour on the Manitoba scene. With funds raised through a variety of functions, the women of both Ladies' Aid societies went about the city and distributed parcels of food and clothing to indigent families, bestowing their personal attention on this important activity.⁹

⁶*Ibid.*, November 26, 1891.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Hebrew Benevolent Society leaders were H. L. Weidman, A. Tirkeltaub, H. Goldstaub, Ben Zimmerman, M. Stamler, Abraham Lechtzier, John Levin, M. Wysfeld, A. Barchadsky, and J. Winogrotsky.

⁹Founding president of the Shaarey Zedek Ladies' Aid Society and outstanding charity worker on both the Jewish and general scene was Mrs. George Frankfurter. For many years Mrs. Frankfurter was an executive member of the Winnipeg Central Relief Committee which was later merged with the Winnipeg Associated Charities. Mrs. Frankfurter also organized the Hebrew Ladies' Sewing Circle which prepared layettes for expectant Jewish mothers and the Whist Club which maintained five beds in the Children's Hospital. Other women worthy of mention for their outstanding and unstinting service to immigrant Jews were Mrs. Elias Tapper and Mrs. William Goldblum.

In addition to its Ladies' Aid Society, the Rosh Pina Congregation established an autonomous Jewish Sick and Relief Society whose primary purposes were to assist its membership in time of illness and to offer relief to needy families. This society raised its money through a monthly assessment of twenty-five cents per member.¹⁰ The Jewish Sick and Relief Society existed for about eight years and was the forerunner of a score of mutual benefit societies which mushroomed in the community some two decades later.

II

In 1900 Canada participated in an empire-wide, fund-raising effort to assist widows and orphans of soldiers who fell in the Boer War. Remembering the hospitality accorded to them by Canada and cognizant of the free condition of Jews throughout the empire, Manitoba Jewry decided to participate in the Canadian Patriotic Fund. In March, 1900, a committee representing a cross-section of the Jewish community was organized which directed the distribution of a circular among Jewish residents, calling them to a meeting in Forrester's Hall. The text of the circular read:

In recognition of the many benefits and unlimited freedom enjoyed by us Jews in Canada and other parts of the world under the flag of Great Britain, and to show our love for the Mother Country and sympathy for those of her sons who have fallen or may fall on the field of battle in South Africa, it is deemed advisable that this meeting should be called, so that one and all may show in a tangible manner that the expression of these feelings is not merely a matter of words, but that they are equally ready with their fellow citizens to render aid in a pecuniary manner to those who are in most need of it.

This fund will be donated in a bulk sum, as being a contribution from the "Jews in Manitoba," and it is the earnest desire of the conveners that the amount shall be of such size that in the future we may be able to look back with pride to the fact that we have done our duty nobly, first as British subjects, and then as Jews, for there was never a time when it was more necessary than the present for us to show that England has no more loyal subjects than the Jews living under the glorious Empire on which the sun never sets.¹¹

One month after their rally a deputation of Jewish leaders called on Lieutenant Governor Patterson and presented to him the amount of \$349.83—Manitoba Jewry's contribution to the Canadian Patriotic Fund. According to the newspaper report it represented "the largest

¹⁰Minutes of Rosh Pina Congregation.

¹¹*Manitoba Free Press*, March 9, 1900.

fund yet raised among Manitoba Jews for charitable purposes.”¹² This accomplishment gave the Jewish community a sense of pride in the fact that they had actively participated in a national undertaking of importance and it tied them more closely to Canada’s destiny. Moreover, it provided a test, albeit a small one, for the enormous challenge which awaited them.

III

The year 1903 brought persecutions of epidemic proportions to Jews in Russia. Hardly a day passed in May, 1903, that did not bring its tales of horror concerning the Jews of Kishinev. Planned by the Czarist authorities to divert the people’s violent dissatisfaction with Russia’s autocracy, the pogroms were deliberately instigated against the Jews. In Kishinev about forty-seven Jews were murdered, hundreds were wounded, more than two thousand families were made homeless. Manitoba newspapers carried, almost daily, accounts of the Kishinev massacres which stirred local Jews to sympathy and action. Taking the initiative, the Zionists of the community raised funds immediately to assist the pogrom victims. But the Kishinev fury was followed by outbursts first against the Jews of Homel (September, 1903) and still later against those of Kherson (1904). The Russian massacres reached their height in the spring and summer of 1905 following Russia’s disastrous defeat at the hands of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War.

There was need for extraordinary enterprise among Canadian and American Jewry to aid their downtrodden people. Manitoba Jewry, shocked and sensitized to the life-and-death needs of their brothers, set to work immediately. Four major organizations, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, the Dr. Gaster Roumanian Society, the newly-established Beth Jacob Congregation, and the Zionist Organization, co-ordinated their efforts under the name of the Kishinev Relief Fund and carried out a programme of fund-raising and relief work.¹³

For overseas use the local fund raised over two thousand dollars which was forwarded to Jacob Schiff, in New York City, who was treasurer of the Kishinev Relief Committee.¹⁴ But there was much

¹²*Ibid.*, April 18, 1900. The Jewish Committee for the Canadian Patriotic Fund consisted of David Balcovske, Ben Zimmerman, Henry Isaacs, H. L. Weidman, Moses Finkelstein, Alex Cohen, Nathan Rosenblatt, Charles Isman, Isaac Rosen, and S. Narvolansky. A full list of donors to the fund is to be found in the *Free Press* of April 18, 1900 and included are Jewish residents of Selkirk and Morden.

¹³H. E. Wilder, ed., *The 100th Anniversary Souvenir of Jewish Emancipation in Canada* (Winnipeg: Israelite Press, 1932).

¹⁴Minutes of Shaarey Zedek Congregation. Also, *Free Press*, December 8, 21, 1905.

more to be done locally, as victims of the pogroms soon began to arrive in Winnipeg, several hundred at a time. The concomitant responsibilities were divided among the four organizations participating in the fund. The Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Zionist Organization devoted attention to the actual fund-raising. The Dr. Gaster Roumanian Society established a large free kitchen in Edward Hall where meals were served daily to the new immigrants. Beth Jacob Synagogue, hardly completed in 1904, opened its doors wide to the newcomers for dormitory use, and when the worship hall was filled beyond capacity the younger immigrants were given picks and shovels with which to dig a basement to accommodate the overflow.¹⁵

In a sense the relief work of 1904-5 was a recapitulation of the first efforts of 1882, except that in this later undertaking Winnipeg Jewish settlers were considerably stronger in number and far better equipped with the skill, the experience, and the financial resources necessary to cope with the problems of relief and settlement. Again, as in 1882, kind Christians assisted in a variety of ways including contributions of money to the Kishinev Relief Fund, gifts of food and clothing, and offers of jobs. Once again local Jewry experienced the gratifying lesson that through united effort they could overcome great obstacles and achieve tremendous good. But it was a lesson too quickly forgotten and when the emergency had waned united determination abated and the Jewish community tended to splinter once again. Each organization pursued its individual course without any semblance of a broad, integrated approach. As one contemporary summarized it, "each group made Sabbath for itself."¹⁶

IV

The next few years brought a steady flow of Jewish immigrants to Winnipeg, considerable numbers of whom were in impoverished circumstances. Many, in fact, were utterly destitute, without homes or steady jobs. Some did receive assistance from the separate organizations who had supported the Kishinev Relief Fund, but on the whole such aid was sporadic and incomplete. The philanthropic and welfare zeal, so recently rallied, and so well directed, seemed to be completely spent. It was Chief Rabbi I. I. Kahanovitch who provided the impetus for the solution of this chaotic situation. Within two years after

¹⁵Information about the Beth Jacob dormitory project was given by Phillip Lechtzier who conceived the idea and supervised its achievement.

¹⁶A. Osovsky in the *Canadian Israelite*, July 11, 1912.

his arrival this man of vision and gentle authority succeeded in bringing together a group of men, whom he urged to organize a city-wide relief organization, and on whose board he prevailed upon them to serve. Thus was born the United Hebrew Charities.¹⁷

The new organization embarked upon its work with energy. During the years 1910-12 six thousand dollars were collected annually through a house-to-house canvass and distributed among the local poor, according to the particular needs of each individual.

But again division superseded unity. By 1911 the Jewish community was quite clearly divided, both socially and geographically, into North Enders and South Enders.¹⁸ The bulk of the South-End group consisted of the pioneer families who had settled in Winnipeg before 1900. They were well established financially, had struck roots, and had naturally assumed leadership in all community undertakings. But by 1911 the North End was beginning to come into its own and some of its more independent spirits urged that North Enders should take the reins of leadership into their own hands, especially because the majority of Jews, 75 per cent of the contributors and 100 per cent of the charity cases, were resident in the North End. Basing their claim on these facts, the dissidents took the offensive and asked why community leadership should be vested in South Enders exclusively. Boldly and confidently they then proceeded to establish their own agency, the North-End Relief Society. To judge from the *Canadian Israelite* the act of breaking off from the United Hebrew Charities was strongly decried by thoughtful men in the community—"Is it not tragi-comic," asked the *Canadian Israelite* in an editorial, "to observe our poor moving from one charity organization to another to receive their dole? Such divisiveness as prevails can lead only to more extensive suffering by our unfortunates."¹⁹

This time it was a group of B'nai B'rith leaders who in an attempt to re-establish a single United Hebrew Charities took the initiative and convened a meeting of the representatives of the various organizations in March, 1911. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Falk, Executive Director of Winnipeg's Associated Charities, who demonstrated on the basis of his own organization's experience the wisdom of a single

¹⁷First executive members of United Hebrew Charities were Simon A. Ripstein, president, Ben Zimmerman, Tevel Finkelstein, Eli Cherniak, S. Goldin, M. Haid, Isaac Portgal, Jacob Udow, Herman Steinkopf, J. J. Shragge, and Isaac Rosen, all members of the Board of Directors.

¹⁸North End is the area to the north of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks; South End was initially directly to the south of these tracks but in time it became the region beyond the Maryland Bridge, i.e. River Heights.

¹⁹*Canadian Israelite (Kanader Yid)*, November 3, 1911.

fund-raising machine in the Jewish community. Many meetings were to follow separated by protracted negotiations and fruitless attempts at reunion until finally in October, 1914, the United Hebrew Charities and the North-End Relief Society joined forces under a new name—United Hebrew Relief of Winnipeg. S. Hart Green was elected president of the amalgamated organization which was put on a new administrative basis.²⁰ An office was set up in the Talmud Torah, and, for the first time, a secretary was engaged to supervise the affairs of the agency.

The status of the United Hebrew Relief was much enhanced when in 1922 it was invited to participate as a member agency of the Winnipeg Community Chest. This relationship was discontinued in 1925, however, because the board felt it could do better in a direct appeal for funds to the Jewish residents. In 1937, after twenty-three years of vital social service the United Hebrew Relief was integrated into the newly established Jewish Welfare Fund.

V

Early in the century, the philanthropic impulse of Winnipeg Jewry was directed to a completely new problem, that of orphaned and dependent children. True, the problem had been dealt with in the past but only intermittently and in a haphazard fashion. Prior to 1912 the relatively small number of Jewish orphan children were placed in non-Jewish homes and institutions, but with the growth of the Jewish population in Manitoba and western Canada the need for a large and proper orphan's home became more and more evident.²¹ The steady influx of persecuted and penniless Jews who arrived between 1903 and 1912 brought in its wake a prevailing condition of poverty and illness within the immigrant sector of the population.²² Large families with young children were numerous; each was dependent upon a single wage earner, the father, and when illness or death struck, the children were left destitute. A growing number of these cases constituted a prod to the community conscience.

²⁰United Hebrew Relief Officials were S. Hart Green, president, Abraham Slobinsky, M. W. Triller, Abraham Berg, David Rusen, Benjamin Levinson, Samuel Shore, David Spivak, Jack Wiseman, Sam Goldin, Leon Snider, Joseph A. Chmelnytsky, Joseph Gershfield, Michael Tessler, and Israel Fiskin.

²¹Arthur D. Hart, *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto and Montreal, 1926), p. 227.

²²The slum conditions and poverty of the Jewish immigrants were so disturbing as to move a group of Winnipeg churchwomen to demand action by the city authorities to bring about better housing and sanitary conditions. See *Free Press*, October 9, 1906.

Accordingly, in 1912 the Hebrew Ladies' Orphan Home Association was formed in the interests of establishing a Jewish orphan's home. At the same time the Winnipeg B'nai B'rith Lodge began to give consideration to this matter and the first concrete step that was taken to realize the objective of establishing a home was a meeting held in January, 1913, between representatives of both organizations. The new committee was headed by R. S. Robinson who offered a substantial sum of money towards the project with the stipulation that the new institution bear the name of his late mother, Esther Robinson. The committee, though appreciative of Robinson's generous offer, did not consider it advisable to accept it on the ground that a public institution which was to be built by public contributions ought not, as a matter of principle, perpetuate the name of a single individual for a pecuniary consideration. As a result of the differences between Robinson and the rest of the organizing committee two orphanages opened their doors in 1913, the Canadian Jewish Orphanage with A. H. Aronovitch as president, and the Esther Robinson Orphan's Home with David Balcovske as its president.

Sponsors of the Canadian Jewish Orphanage rented premises on Selkirk Avenue and enlisted the support of several hundred men and women, each of whom made a regular contribution towards the home's maintenance. It was the plan of this group to purchase a large piece of land with a view to erecting a new orphanage, an old people's home, and a Jewish hospital on the same grounds. The execution of this grand scheme, however, was arrested by the outbreak of World War I. The Esther Robinson Home was established in a house on Robinson Street and, while R. S. Robinson provided a substantial initial fund, an appeal was also made to the public for financial support. Thus there came into being two institutions which vied vigorously with each other for orphans and funds.

But an articulate Jewish public, critical of duplication and waste and eager to have the best possible arrangements for orphaned children, began to press for a single institution. Reacting to community feeling, the leaders of both orphanages began negotiations and in October, 1916, Max Steinkopf, a prominent barrister and B'nai B'rith leader who was acting as arbitrator, succeeded in bringing about the merger. The Jewish Orphanage and Children's Aid of Western Canada opened in February, 1917, under the presidency of E. R. Levinson. Mr. and Mrs. I. L. Greenberg of Chicago, a couple with high qualifications, who had had considerable experience in orphanage work in the United States, were engaged to serve as superintendent and matron of the home.

Very soon the quarters at 1280 Main Street became wholly inadequate and the need for a large and permanent structure imperative. The Board of the Jewish Orphanage decided to undertake the largest fund-raising effort in the history of western Canada and embarked upon a campaign to raise \$100,000 in Manitoba and the western provinces. Through an extensive education programme the orphanage gained wide support in Jewish communities from Fort William, Ontario, to Vancouver, B.C. The Ladies' Society with a membership of fifteen hundred worked unremittingly canvassing from door to door. Ben Schachter took charge of the campaign outside the city and Aaron Rabinovitch supervised the Winnipeg effort. During a ten-day period in September, 1918, forty thousand dollars were raised in cash and forty thousand dollars in pledges.

Quite suddenly the work of the campaign was interrupted by the influenza epidemic of 1918 which took a disastrous toll of lives. The resultant tragic increase of orphans underscored dramatically and poignantly the urgent need for a large home and the entire community, in fact, half the country, rallied zealously to its immediate fulfilment. In August, 1919, the cornerstone of the building was laid by Ekiel Bronfman on the Matheson Avenue site and in February, 1920, the Jewish Orphanage was completed. A three-storey structure built in the style of a large private residence which stood on five and one-half acres of park-like grounds, it provided excellent facilities for 150 children. From 1920 until 1948 children were reared in a thoroughly Jewish atmosphere in the Jewish Orphanage of Winnipeg. The Jewish Orphanage had its own staff of teachers who taught the children both general and Jewish studies. It had its own synagogue, choir, band, and athletic team and was considered a model institution.²³

VI

Less dramatic but equally compelling was the plight of aged Jewish men and women who were without homes and families, in poor health, or in straitened circumstances. In 1912, while attention was being focused upon Jewish orphans' needs, a group of women organized themselves to give serious consideration to the establishment of a home for the aged. Taking the lead in this undertaking were Mesdames N. Rosenblat, B. Shragge, A. H. Aronovitch, R. Wodlinger, and R.

²³Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, pp. 227-30. Later supervisors of the institution, after the Greenbergs, were Mr. and Mrs. A. Osovsky and Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Wilder.

Abramovitch who soon attracted others among their friends to the project. Before long the women realized that alone they could achieve very little; they therefore approached a group of like-minded men and together they formed an association whose purpose was to establish an old people's home in Winnipeg. One of the first men to respond was Joseph Genser, who was elected president.

A house was rented on Euclid Avenue where five aged men and women were immediately sheltered. During the next few years the number of old people who sought admittance to the Euclid Avenue home was so great as to render these crowded quarters unfit for further use. In April, 1919, S. Cossoy, erstwhile president, launched a campaign for funds at a mass meeting especially convened for this purpose. The appeal met with a hearty and generous response. A special committee located a suitable apartment block of forty rooms on Manitoba Avenue which they purchased at a cost of twenty thousand dollars. In November, 1919, the new premises were formally opened before a large and interested assemblage under the chairmanship of S. Hart Green and with the blessings of Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch. Under the devoted leadership of J. A. Chmelnitsky and Abraham Slobinsky, successive presidents of the Jewish Old Folks' Home of Western Canada, it developed into an important institution in Winnipeg and western Canada.²⁴

In the years which followed there was a steady increase in the number of Jewish aged who required admission to the home. The idea of building a new and larger structure was considered by the home's board of directors for a number of years. In 1940 a large parcel of land was purchased on Magnus Avenue East and a modern building was erected at a cost of \$100,000. In 1952, and again in 1956, a wing was added to the home, these additions making available excellent accommodations for 175 aged. Under the supervision of a qualified medical director and a full professional staff the Jewish Old Folks' Home began to develop a worthwhile geriatrics programme.

VII

But Manitoba Jewry was not an island unto itself. Whatever occurred beyond its borders reached into its homes and meeting places and elicited an immediate response. Upon the outbreak of World War I, in August, 1914, Winnipeg Jews were stirred to action by rousing editorials in the *Canadian Israelite* which advocated immediate fund-

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

raising to assist their eastern European brethren. At a mass meeting held in October, 1914, at the Talmud Torah, leading Jewish citizens appealed for contributions to the Jewish War Relief Fund. In spite of a temporary depression and in spite of heavy local charity commitments the community responded liberally. At the behest of S. Hart Green a large number of people signed pledges for monthly contributions ranging from fifty cents to as much as eight dollars.

As the war continued the relief needs of European Jewry increased and in August, 1915, a special conference of forty-one Winnipeg Jewish societies was convened for the purpose of establishing a permanent co-ordinating body.²⁵ Elected as chairman of the Western Canada Relief Alliance was Rabbi Herbert J. Samuel of Shaarey Zedek Congregation.²⁶ A major accomplishment of the alliance was the organization of a remarkable collector's brigade consisting of two hundred energetic and devoted men and women who volunteered to canvass Jewish homes for contributions each Sunday. Brigade members, in pairs, went from house to house along assigned routes and collected money for relief purposes. In this way every Jewish family in Winnipeg was called upon to make regular contributions throughout the years of World War I. During the years of its work the Western Canada Relief Alliance raised nearly four hundred thousand dollars in Manitoba and western Canada which it transmitted for overseas use to the American Joint Distribution Committee in New York City. In addition to money the local committee sent large quantities of clothing and medicine, valued at one hundred thousand dollars. For the second time in its short history Jews of Manitoba allied themselves with an international relief organization for the purpose of sending speedy and effective assistance to Jewish victims abroad.²⁷

VIII

Parallel to the organization of war relief work in 1915, Winnipeg Jewish leaders strongly supported by the *Israelite Press* proceeded to rally public opinion behind another project which was suggested by the problems of World War I and which had already aroused the interest of progressive, intellectual leaders on the American continent in Europe and in South Africa. There was a growing desire among world Jewry for a Jewish congress which would give expression to

²⁵Minutes of Western Canada Relief Alliance.

²⁶In addition to Rabbi Samuel there were elected C. Salzman, a Socialist; M. A. Gray, Labour Zionist; L. Gutkin, Yiddishist; and A. Slobinsky, Orthodox leader.

²⁷The first instance had been the Kishinev Relief Fund in 1905.

the will of the Jewish masses through their own democratically-elected representatives. Such a body could serve as a forum for Jewish thinking and a spokesman on Jewish rights to the peace conference whenever it should be convened. There was the future of Europe's Jews to be considered. What rights would be guaranteed to them in the new national states that would be created in the war's aftermath? What of the Jewish future in Palestine?

The initial stirrings towards a national Jewish congress in Canada led to an exploratory meeting which took place in Montreal in March, 1915. The feeling was general that the time was ripe for the organization of a national body; many diverse segments of the Jewish community, including synagogues, labour unions, cultural organizations, and loan societies, in all some 71 Jewish organizations, sent representatives to the meeting. Dr. Yehuda Kaufman, outstanding Hebrew scholar and Labour Zionist leader, set forth the aim of the Montreal conference:

The Canadian Jews are citizens of the great British Empire and are therefore in a position to ask their Government to protect the rights of our brethren in Russia and Poland. The Canadian Jews are citizens of a pioneer country with great immigration and colonization possibilities. The Canadian Jews are also by the territorial position of Canada culturally and economically in contact with the Jewish population in the United States and like them we also need and want to formulate on the platform of a Jewish Congress our national representations to the Peace Conference of the world's nations. For the above reasons it is absolutely necessary to hold a convention where Canadian Jewry shall publicly declare itself a national entity and organize for political action.

To this proposal made in Montreal by Dr. Kaufman, Winnipeg Jewry uttered a vigorous "Amen."

The *Israelite Press*, the Yiddish newspaper of Winnipeg, reflected the advanced thinking of Jewish leaders in the community and helped mould the thinking of Jews throughout western Canada. It poured forth a spate of acclaim and support through its editorial columns which established beyond any doubt western Canada's stand on this important national issue.

In Montreal, however, unanimity was not so pronounced. There the Zionist Federation of Canada which had for almost two decades considered itself the exclusive spokesman for Canadian Jewry saw in the plans for a Jewish congress a threat to its role as national leader and policy-maker and effectively blocked for the time being the development and growth of the congress idea.

In the United States, too, during the same period the steady course of united action towards a national and international congress was frustrated by conflicts among the major Jewish organizations of the country. Each body, having its own philosophy and point of view on the vital issues in Jewish life, sought to mould the emerging congress in the image of its own thinking. Nevertheless the central core among the congress advocates, namely, the Zionist and Labour Zionist groups, sure of the rightness of their cause met in Philadelphia in March, 1916, and adopted a programme for convening a congress. Impressed by the large and vigorous meeting the congress opponents began to reconsider their initial objections and within seven months of the Philadelphia gathering the various opposing factions had hammered out a working agreement and merged under the name of the American Jewish Congress.²⁸

In Winnipeg M. J. Finkelstein, barrister, influential community leader, and staunch General Zionist, was in touch with exponents of the congress movement in the United States. Finkelstein was the pivotal figure in the decision to organize an independent regional conference for western Canada. In this decision he was strongly supported by Joseph A. Cherniak, Ben Sheps, and other local Labour Zionist leaders whose organization as a whole espoused the idea of a congress. Further impetus was given to these early stirrings by the visits to Winnipeg of two important Labour Zionist ideologists, Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky and David Ben Gurion, whose vigorous commitments to the need of a World Jewish Congress pushed the embryonic movement closer to fruition.²⁹

Taking their cue from the encouraging developments in the United States, Finkelstein and his co-workers in Winnipeg took the initiative and in August, 1916, convened the first meeting of its kind in western Canada which they designated as the Western Jewish Conference.³⁰ Nachman Syrkin, Labour Zionist theoretician, and Reuben Brainin, gifted Yiddish author and journalist, were invited to participate in the conference. For several days they guided the deliberations, where with their sincerity of purpose and brilliant oratory they aroused in an audience of two thousand people a readiness to dedicate themselves to the congress goal. Finkelstein, who was co-chairman of the conference, proposed that the function of a permanent Canadian Jewish

²⁸For a complete treatment of the American Jewish Congress see Rufus Learsy, *The Jews in America*, (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 259-67.

²⁹S. Belkin, *The Labor Zionist Movement in Canada* (Montreal, 1956).

³⁰*Israelite Press*, August 28, 1916.

Congress must embrace immigration and relief work. Indeed for want of a broader programme of action, it was almost exclusively in the field of relief that the conference gave tangible expression to its serious intentions during the next three years.³¹

In the meantime the dynamics of Jewish communal life in eastern Canada, where the national leadership was concentrated, were undergoing change. In January, 1918, at the Sixteenth Convention of the Canadian Zionist Federation Clarence De Sola, long-time president, was succeeded by A. J. Freiman. With the new administration the attitude of General Zionists towards the establishment of a Canadian Jewish Congress altered drastically.

Positive, too, was the programme in the United States of the American Jewish Congress. At an historic meeting in Philadelphia on December 15, 1918, one month after the end of World War I American Jewry unanimously decided to send a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference to achieve a recognition of Jewish rights. This delegation was instructed to co-operate with the World Zionist Organization "to the end that the Peace Conference may recognize the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine." It was entirely natural that the enthusiasm and optimism which preceded the Peace Conference should have spilled over the border into Canada. By now Canadian Jewish leaders had caught up with the masses in their readiness for a congress. At a meeting hastily convened in Toronto only one week prior to the Philadelphia conference five Canadian delegates were appointed as observers of the American deliberations. One of these was J. A. Cherniak of Winnipeg. The five returned to Canada imbued with the earnest conviction that the time was ripe for the emergence of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

In February, 1919, an all-Canada preliminary conference met in Toronto to plan the convening of the Congress. It was decided that elections of delegates would take place across the country on March 2 and that the Congress would open officially in Montreal on March 16, 1919. Feverish excitement and vigorous interest characterized the pre-election campaign in Winnipeg. The *Israelite Press* carried the colourful advertisements of the many candidates who sought election. In one issue the newspaper carried a complete biographical sketch of every candidate in the field.³² It is particularly remembered that March 2, 1919 was an inordinately cold day in Winnipeg. The cold notwithstanding, 3481 people came to the Talmud Torah auditorium to cast their ballots. Chief Rabbi Kahanovitch headed the polls with

³¹*Ibid.*, September 1, 1916.

³²*Ibid.*, February 28, 1919.

2,673 votes. Other delegates elected were Myer Averbach, M. J. Finkelstein, Sam Green, B. Miller, Ben Sheps, M. Tessler, S. Almazoff, Rabbi J. Gorodsky, Rabbi Herbert J. Samuel, Joseph Hestrin, Philip Ney, Max Steinkopf, H. L. Weidman, J. A. Cherniak, M. A. Gray, Marcus Hyman, A. Osovsky, M. W. Triller, M. Waisman, and Harry E. Wilder. An examination of the affiliations of these delegates reveals as representative a group of Jewish leaders as could be found. At the Congress sessions held in Montreal on March 16, 17, 18, the Manitoba contingent played a vital role, with M. J. Finkelstein and Ben Sheps as chairmen of important committees and Harry E. Wilder as English secretary. Observers at the Montreal sessions reported that the Manitoba delegation was the best knit block of representatives in attendance.³³ M. J. Finkelstein was elected vice-president of the National Executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress and Ben Sheps secretary.

On their return from Montreal the delegates reported the major achievements of the first Canadian Jewish Congress.³⁴ At a mass meeting held in their honour they informed their listeners that Congress leaders had been mandated to carry out these immediate tasks:

1. That Congress representatives join together with the *Comte des Delegations Juives aupres de la Conference de Paix* (Committee of Jewish Delegations at the Peace Conference) in Paris and work for the endorsement by the Peace Conference of the Balfour Declaration and the appointment of Great Britain as the Mandatory of Palestine.
2. That Congress make known its sentiments to the Canadian government favoring a continuing policy of open door for all immigrants and simultaneously create a central bureau to assist immigrants through branches in all large cities and ports of entry.³⁵

Manitoba Jews heartily endorsed both of these important decisions. When Canadian representatives went to Paris to participate in the Versailles Peace Conference, they had the wholehearted support of western Canadian Jewry and with the establishment of the Winnipeg branch of the Jewish Immigration Aid Society in 1920, the immigration programme adopted by the Canadian Jewish Congress was launched in Western Canada.

IX

In Winnipeg the immigration decisions were taken seriously. Ben Sheps and others undertook to re-organize the dormant Hebrew Immi-

³³*Ibid.*, March 20, 1919.

³⁴*Israelite Press*, March 25, 1919.

³⁵Minutes of First Canadian Jewish Congress.

gration Society which had had its beginnings in Winnipeg in 1912.³⁶ Founded by Isaac Ludwig and C. Salzman to assist Jewish immigrants to Manitoba with loans, job placement, and friendly counsel, the society also worked for the liberalization of Canada's immigration policy. During World War I the work of the Hebrew Immigration Society was severely curtailed. Now through the stimulus of Congress it began to function once again with vigour. It raised funds for immigrant aid and campaigned steadily for a liberal immigration policy.³⁷

The society found a sympathetic friend in the Hon. E. J. McMurray, member of parliament from North Winnipeg, who had been strongly supported by Jewish voters, largely on the basis of his advocacy of a liberal immigration policy. In 1921 when the United States shut its doors against immigrants from Europe, the society in Winnipeg convened a large mass meeting and invited McMurray to address the meeting. Resolutions were adopted urging the Canadian government to follow a more liberal immigration policy. In that year, too, the society in Winnipeg became part of a national organization—the Jewish Immigration Aid Society of Canada. The J.I.A.S. had become a national organization by a federal charter, but it remained a weak body with only the Winnipeg branch giving vigorous support. In the spring of 1922 Winnipeggers sponsored a *yarid*, an old country fair, and raised ten thousand dollars for J.I.A.S. This sum enabled the national organization to carry on its campaign for freer immigration and its assistance programme for immigrants. That same summer the local J.I.A.S. was extremely helpful in placing Jewish harvesters who had landed in Montreal a short time earlier. A large portion of these newcomers remained in Manitoba or in another of the prairie provinces.

In the period between 1924 and 1930 J.I.A.S. assisted 27,913 Jewish immigrants who came to Canada. A turning-point in Canadian immigration policy came in 1930 when the newly elected Conservative government of Premier R. B. Bennett passed a series of highly restrictive laws which permitted only the wives of residents and their children under eighteen to enter the country. Between 1932 and 1935 Jewish immigration into Canada dwindled to 3,669 and the work of J.I.A.S. was reduced commensurately. Its efforts were greatly extended again after World War II when Canada opened its doors to Europe's displaced persons. J.I.A.S. of Winnipeg has been in a pivotal position in all of the years of the organization's existence, helping to

³⁶*Israelite*, February 29, 1912.

³⁷Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, pp. 490-5.

receive and integrate Jewish immigrants into the life of Manitoba and western Canada.³⁸

X

During the decade following World War I Winnipeg Jewry was confronted with an over-abundance of fund-raising enterprises for a host of causes. Hardly a day passed without a banquet, bazaar, tag day, or door-to-door solicitation. There was urgent need for a proper evaluation of the beneficiaries of these numerous charities. Great generosity notwithstanding, major institutions were bound to suffer if countless smaller appeals were to continue. In May, 1927, a conference of forty-two Winnipeg Jewish organizations was convened and after careful consideration of the haphazard fund-raising situation it was resolved to establish the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau. No solicitation was to be considered legitimate before the beneficiary's programme was carefully scrutinized by the bureau and given its approval.³⁹ The first executive of the newly created bureau were M. J. Finkelstein, Max Heppner, Dr. Charles Bermack, Charles Tadman, and A. Osovsky. In addition, eighteen members were named to the bureau's board of directors. In its statement of purpose the Endorsation Bureau indicated that "the duties of the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau is [*sic*] to investigate the needs of charitable organizations desiring to appeal to the community for funds through campaigns, concerts, drives, etc. and to give official sanction to these endeavours if the investigation warrants it."⁴⁰ A strong appeal was made to Jewish citizenry that before making contributions they demand of all collectors and fund-raisers an official letter of endorsement issued by the bureau.⁴¹ The bureau would be as strong as the co-operation that would be offered to it by the public.

Six months after its organization the strength of the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau was put to its first major test by the Mount Carmel Clinic. After a campaign spearheaded by members of the Hebrew Sick Benefit Society, the clinic had established itself in 1926 in modest quarters on Pritchard Avenue and was staffed by Jewish medical men who volunteered their professional services.⁴² It was intended to offer free medical attention to poor Jewish families of the community. But soon the doctors protested the utter inadequacy

³⁸Canadian Jewish Yearbook, 1939-40, p. 222.

³⁹*Israelite Press*, May 6, 1927.

⁴⁰*Jewish Post*, April 22, 1927.

⁴¹*Israelite Press*, June 17, 1927.

⁴²Wilder, ed., *The 100th Anniversary Souvenir*.

of the Pritchard Avenue premises and a project was launched to erect a modern structure.

In the summer of 1928 Mount Carmel Clinic officials applied to the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau for permission to campaign for \$10,000 which they required to maintain and equip their original quarters. Shortly after endorsement had been granted and the campaign had gotten under way, complaints reached the bureau that funds were being solicited not for maintenance and equipment alone but for the building of a new clinic. Asserting its authority the bureau demanded an explanation. The clinic was clearly overstepping the conditions of the endorsement. The clinic representatives explained that their goal was a modest building at a cost not in excess of \$12,000. The bureau directors, skeptical of the clinic's ability to build for so small an amount, demanded full building specifications and tenders; these the clinic agreed to supply. At subsequent meetings it was ascertained that the building costs for the clinic would certainly exceed the original figure by a considerable margin. The matter was put to a vote of the bureau's board of directors. Fourteen votes were cast against the granting of a permit for a building campaign and two were cast in favour. The bureau made its decision known to the community and a furious struggle ensued. The issue was posed to the people: "Shall we go back to the old, inefficient, chaotic, haphazard and costly method of the past, or shall we profit by the sad experiences of some of our older institutions and attempt to introduce some efficiency, order and reasonable common sense into our communal affairs . . ."⁴³ At this point Mount Carmel Clinic leaders chose to break the clinic's affiliation with the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau, thereby alienating the sympathy of a large portion of the public.

In November, 1929, after almost one year outside the bureau's framework, the clinic asked to be readmitted, making acknowledgement of its error in rejecting the bureau's decision. The bureau accepted the clinic's application for readmission. This marked a step forward in the direction of mature community co-ordination. An editorial comment on this development reflected the thinking of the majority: "The controversy has shown that public sympathy is definitely behind the Bureau; in other words, that the public is desirous of having charitable enterprises in this city definitely under the control of a responsible body. . . ."⁴⁴ The work of the Jewish Charities Endorsation Bureau was taken over by the Jewish Welfare Fund in 1937.

The Jewish Welfare Fund enjoyed a steady growth in support and

⁴³*Jewish Post*, November 30, 1928.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, November 15, 1929.

influence in the community. While in 1938 the amount of \$53,000 was raised by its efforts from among 2150 contributors, two decades later, in 1958, the sum of \$517,000 was subscribed by 5800 contributors. Aside from the need to raise the necessary funds for the thirteen beneficiary agencies and schools which the Jewish Welfare Fund supports locally and nationally, this ten-fold increase within two decades was in no small part due to the mature acceptance of responsibility for the extraordinarily large overseas needs which have come in the wake of World War II.⁴⁵

The Jewish Welfare Fund extended its influence beyond the mechanics of fund-raising into the area of community-planning. It co-ordinated a number of existing programmes and it helped to establish services to meet new needs as they arose in the community.

XI

The "dirty thirties" was a dismal decade in the economic and political life of the west. The world was confronted with economic depression; the League of Nations was suffering moral defeat and bankruptcy. Jewry was the victim of growing anti-Semitism in America and abroad. The Hitlerian epoch darkened Europe's horizon and threw its shadows across the Atlantic to the Americas. Canada was no exception, and concern bordering on fear grew steadily among Canadian Jewry. The need for action to defend the democratic rights of Jews in Germany, in Poland, in Palestine, and on the domestic scene became more and more urgent.

Local Jewry again rallied to meet the diverse problems arising out of international developments. The first response was in the form of large mass protest gatherings, an effective medium in the past. In November, 1931, Winnipeg Jewry assembled in large numbers to protest the persistent outrages committed against Polish Jewry. Rabbi Solomon Frank of Shaarey Zedek Synagogue pointed out that Jews had fought side by side with their fellow Poles to achieve independence for Poland and now their rewards were pogroms and economic boycott. A. A. Heaps, Jewish member of the Federal Parliament from North Winnipeg, strongly denounced Polish anti-Semitism and assured the rally that he would raise the problem at the forthcoming session of Parliament.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Information offered by Aaron Feld, Executive Director of Jewish Welfare Fund of Winnipeg.

⁴⁶*Israelite Press*, November 27, 1931.

But mass protests alone were inadequate to the growing crises. A well-integrated and vigorous organization was needed locally and nationally. What about the Canadian Jewish Congress, so enthusiastically hailed at its inception in 1919, which now had lain dormant for 12 years? This was the organization which Winnipeg leaders decided to re-activate. In April, 1933, at a conference of Jewish organizations of the city the Congress was reconstituted with newly elected officials and was given a new name—the Western Canadian Jewish Congress Committee.⁴⁷ The Committee made contact with western Jewish communities and proposed the convening of an all-west conference to be held in Winnipeg in July. The response from the communities was immediate and affirmative.

In July, 1933, the delegates met and devoted their attention to an agenda of three major points: (1) defence against anti-Semitism abroad and locally; (2) relief for German Jews; (3) establishment of a permanent congress. There was absolute unanimity about the urgency for this three-fold approach and the conference of July 9 and 10 urged that immediate steps be taken to implement the programme. A resolution was passed recommending the establishment of local branches of Congress throughout Canada.⁴⁸ A platform was adopted for an All-Canadian Congress whose aims were:

1. To safeguard civil, political, economic and religious rights of the Jews.
2. To devote attention to the problems arising within the Jewish community culturally, economically and socially.
3. To further the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, as one of the countries most readily accessible for immigration.
4. To assist the organization of world Jewry through the forthcoming World Jewish Congress.
5. To combat manifestations of anti-semitism in Canada by means of an intensive campaign of enlightenment and education.⁴⁹

The officers of the revived Western Canadian Jewish Congress were M. J. Finkelstein, president, and J. A. Cherniak, vice-president.

Western Canadian Jewry under Winnipeg leadership set the pattern for eastern Canadian Jews and there, too, the wheels were set into motion for local organization with an eye to the re-establishment of a national body. In January, 1934, a national convention was convened in Toronto, with a large western delegation in attendance and

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, April 28, 1933.

⁴⁸*Winnipeg Free Press* and *Tribune*, July 10, 11, 1933.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

the Canadian Jewish Congress was revived and revitalized. Henceforth, Canadian Jewry had a forum from which it could address itself to the outside world and a tribunal where it could handle its internal affairs. In the years which followed, Congress became a vital and influential force in Canadian life. Manitoba Jewry had reason to be gratified with this important achievement; it had played a significant role in the development of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

XII

From the very outbreak of World War II Manitoba Jewry along with all of Canadian Jewry dedicated itself wholeheartedly to the cause of victory and all Jewish communal organizations were mobilized towards this goal. Commenting in retrospect on the record of Canadian Jews in the armed forces in World War II Prime Minister Mackenzie King said:

For the Jewish people the recent war had an especial significance. The way of all free peoples was threatened by Nazi and Fascist aggression. In addition, the Jewish people had the even sterner realization that for them it was not only a way of life, but life itself that was at stake. They fought not only for freedom but for survival. The contribution of the Jews of Canada bears eloquent testimony to the manner in which they met the double threat the war presented.⁵⁰

Jewish fighting men from Manitoba served in every area of the war in which Canada's armed forces were engaged. They fought at Hong Kong and took part in the Dieppe raids. They were among the Canadian sailors who helped to clear the Atlantic of the Nazi U-boats. There was a goodly number of them among the airmen who carried the war to the enemy. There was hardly a Jewish home in Manitoba which did not give one of its own to the military services, some homes more than one, as in the instance of the Winnipeg Kushner family who had five sons in uniform. And when the sad but heroic tally of casualties was complete sixty-five of them were known to have made the supreme sacrifice. Many more of them had been wounded in action and at least 33 of Manitoba's Jewish servicemen were decorated for heroic action.⁵¹ Seven were made members of the Order of the British Empire and nine were recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

⁵⁰David Rome, ed., *Canadian Jews in World War II, Part 1* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947).

⁵¹*Ibid.*

Back home in Manitoba the Canadian Jewish Congress stimulated and co-ordinated the work of local war efforts committees. Centres of hospitality and recreation were established by the Jewish Committee in Winnipeg. Jewish servicemen stationed in or near Portage La Prairie and Brandon were warmly welcomed in private homes and local synagogues. Largely responsible for this work were the hundreds of Jewish women volunteers who were known as the Women's War Efforts Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress. In addition to serving in the recreation centres these women sent thousands of comfort boxes to the men overseas. From all the fighting fronts came a steady flow of correspondence in token of deep appreciation. The women also organized next-of-kin clubs through which they offered friendship and support to the wives and mothers of service men overseas.

A Winnipeg Jewish organization which played a significant part during World War II was the General Monash Branch of the Canadian Legion. This organization of World War I veterans had come into being in 1934 as a result of a specific problem—the ominous rise of anti-Semitism on the Canadian scene. Pro-Nazi groups were springing up and in a number of instances these societies were drawing their nucleus of sympathizers from among World War I veterans.⁵² Until 1934 Jewish war veterans, of whom there were a considerable number in Winnipeg, had seen no need to organize as a body and had joined the regular non-ethnic branches of the Canadian Legion in the community. With an organized anti-Semitic threat at hand, however, the Jewish veterans felt the need to assert themselves as a patriotic body. Thus was born the General Monash Branch. In addition to fulfilling the general aims and purposes of the Canadian Legion, the General Monash Branch also carried on a vigorous campaign against those anti-Semitic forces who sought to make inroads into the Legion. Their efforts were successful, the General Monash leaders gaining the support of the Canadian Legion in barring from Legion membership any ex-servicemen identified with pro-Nazi organizations. The General Monash Branch continued its efforts in the several years ahead against anti-Semitism with success. During World War II these Jewish veter-

⁵²According to H. E. Wilder in the *The 100th Anniversary Souvenir* (Winnipeg: Israelite Press, 1932) a considerable number of Manitoba Jewish boys enlisted when volunteers were called in the early period of World War I and "hundreds were recruited" when conscription was introduced. As no written records were actually kept it is impossible to ascertain the exact or even the approximate numbers of Jewish men who served in World War I. Eight Manitoba Jewish soldiers who were killed in action during World War I are memorialized in Shaarey Zedek Synagogue. Wilder also reports that when Canada's Victory Loan was launched thousands of Jewish residents responded.

ans of the earlier war gave themselves over to a variety of tasks including the organization of the Manitoba Volunteer Reserve in North Winnipeg, assisting in national registration, the Legion War Services Campaign, and the blood donor's clinic. After World War II the ranks of the General Monash Branch were greatly augmented by the new Jewish veterans.

At the Second World War's end the record of Manitoba Jewry's effort indicated clearly that this people could legitimately share with their fellow Canadians a sense of pride in the sacrifice and courage demonstrated overseas and at home.⁵⁸

⁵⁸An organization outstandingly devoted to the civilian war effort was the National Council of Jewish Women. Established in Winnipeg in 1925 by Mrs. S. Hart Green, Mrs. Max Heppner, and Mrs. Samuel Rodin, the Council did fine work in Canadianization projects among immigrants. A singular achievement was the Council-sponsored night classes for instruction in English.

Chapter Ten

THE ZIONIST DREAM

FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES before 1890 the idea of a Jewish return to Zion was kept before the public by Manitoba newspapers who frequently featured stories on this subject. During Disraeli's tenure as British prime minister it was conjectured in the local press that he would use his influence to effect the establishment of an independent Jewish state.¹ Stories about Laurence Oliphant, colourful adventurer, told that he was negotiating with European political circles for the achievement of this goal. George Eliot's pro-Zionist novel, *Daniel Deronda*, was widely read in Canada and registered its plea for the Jewish return to Zion. Frequent reports reached Winnipeg of the efforts of Sir Moses Montefiore on behalf of a resettlement of Jews in Palestine. Manitobans heard a first-hand account about Palestine from a Jerusalem rabbi-physician who came to Winnipeg in August, 1889, to interest the Jewish community in contributing funds towards the erection of schools for children in the Holy Land.²

These and other reports that Jews were beginning to look to Palestine as a solution to their quest for a permanent home for persecuted Jews, prodded Bible-conscious Manitobans to examine this proposal seriously. In April, 1891, Rev. Joseph Hogg spoke from his pulpit in St. Andrew's Church and endorsed the idea of a Palestinian refuge for homeless Jews. Shortly after Rev. Hogg's endorsement a Mr. J. Landsberg of Toronto delivered a public lecture under his own auspices in Winnipeg's Albert Hall, on the theme "Persecution of Jews in Russia." Landsberg said that he did not agree with Rev. Hogg and other good Christians who advocated helping the Jews back to Palestine.³ He argued that it would be much better for the Jews if they settled on Manitoba farmland as had the Mennonites in the Gretna district. Thereby they could become "an honour to God and the nation."⁴

In June, 1891, several letters to the editor appeared in the *Manitoba*

¹*Manitoba Free Press*, July 29, 1878.

²See Arthur A. Chiel, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1955).

³*Manitoba Free Press*, April 25, 1891.

⁴*Ibid.*

Free Press on the subject. One writer who signed himself "An Anxious Inquirer" wrote:

I noticed in yesterday's issue a cablegram from London, England headed "The Jews and Palestine" embodying a request from the Chovevi Zion Society, through Lord Rothschild, to entreat Lord Salisbury to use his good offices in concert with the other powers to guarantee the protection of Jewish immigrants during their migration and after settlement in Palestine. Will some of our learned pastors of the city give us some information concerning this, and tell us if such a step be in harmony with prophecy. If they, the Jews, are to be re-established in that land, and if so, what meaning has it for the Gentile nations of the earth.⁵

I

For the Jews of Manitoba and for Jews everywhere the settlement of Palestine was very much "in harmony with prophecy." Everywhere, Jews were rallying to make the prophecy "And the children shall return to their boundaries" a living fact. In Winnipeg the first efforts to promote the Zionist cause were made in 1898 when H. L. Weidman, M. Vineberg, and I. Rosen organized the Winnipeg Zionist Society. They were invited to join the newly-formed Canadian Zionist Federation and in doing so became one of the first five chapters of that national organization. At a conference held in Montreal in February, 1899, it was reported that the Winnipeg Society was the second largest chapter with an enrolment of seventy-five members.⁶ By the time of its founding convention on November 7, 1899, the Zionist Federation of Canada had formulated a definition of the major purposes of the separate local societies. They were to carry on educational propaganda within Jewish communities across Canada and to sell shares in the Jewish Colonial Trust which would finance the purchase of land in Palestine. The Winnipeg Society fulfilled both aims, by sponsoring frequent educational meetings open to all and by selling shares in the Colonial Trust to Jews of the community. Under the name of Ohavei Zion, Lovers of Zion, the membership grew to one hundred by 1900. In 1903, with the arrival of a new wave of Russian-Jewish immigrants the Zionist programme was given considerable impetus. Among the arrivals were men and women whose Zionist philosophy was the result of a personal experience of persecution and rejection. Theirs was a zealous commitment to what was for them the best solution to the Jewish problem—a homeland in Palestine.

⁵*Ibid.*, June 17, 1891.

⁶A. D. Hart, *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto, 1926) p. 292.

In order to attract Canadian youth to Zionism, Joseph J. Goodman, assisted by N. P. Tapper, Neiman Weidman, and H. Narvolansky organized the Young Zionists Athletic Club in 1903. In announcing the formation of the club, Goodman stated that "young Jews are no different from other youth in their mode of life" and are able athletes and sportsmen. As its leaders envisaged them, the purposes of the Young Zionists Athletic Club were to encourage Canadian patriotism and to improve the physical, spiritual, social, and economic condition of its members. Of course, a major aim was to cultivate a love for Zion in young Jews. The club was given encouragement by the Ohavei Zion leaders who provided a reading room and a gymnasium in Edward Hall for the young people.⁷

At its first annual meeting, nine months after its organization, the Young Zionists Athletic Club decided to affiliate with the Knights of Zion, a Zionist fraternal organization in the United States. The meeting was very well attended and its leaders noted with pride that "the large attendance spoke most favourably for the progressiveness and popularity of the club as a social and educational organization."⁸ A survey of the activities of the Y.Z.A.C. corroborates this designation. They included a minstrel show, social dances, and regular lectures which featured guest speakers. W. Sanford Evans, *Tribune* editor, spoke on "Courage"; J. W. Dafoe of the *Free Press* delivered a lecture on "Imperialism"; and Max Steinkopf, Winnipeg's first Jewish barrister, lectured on "Our Patriotism." In 1904 the Y.Z.A.C. organized the Young Zionist Band which presented summer concerts in Winnipeg parks for a number of years.

II

In October, 1903, Winnipeg Zionists were invited to consider an important proposal which had been brought before the Sixth Zionist Congress when it met that year in Basle, Switzerland. Britain's Foreign Office had proposed to Dr. Theodor Herzl that the Zionists consider the colonization of Jews in Britain's East African Protectorate. The Sixth Zionist Congress seethed with argument over the issue of a Jewish colony elsewhere than in Palestine. Asher Pierce, an executive officer of the National Federation of Zionists, came from Montreal to solicit the reaction of Winnipeg Zionists. At a turbulent meeting in Edward Hall on October 12, 1903, Pierce avowed that the East African scheme, if adopted, would be only a temporary measure of

⁷*Manitoba Free Press*, April 4, 1903.

⁸*Ibid.*, October 6, 1903.

relief for homeless Jews, and could never be considered a substitute for the "first and most important object of our movement, which is a homeland for Jews in Palestine." He then posed the question before Winnipeg Zionists: "Is it considered advisable while awaiting the securing of Palestine, to provide a temporary relief for our persecuted brethren by accepting the British offer of a Jewish autonomous colony in East Africa, or should we on the contrary allow the present state of affairs to continue indefinitely and do nothing in the form of temporary relief, but limit our efforts exclusively to negotiations for Palestine."⁹ Asher Pierce told the large Zionist audience in Winnipeg that expressions of opinion would be taken in every city of the world where there was a Zionist organization so that a final decision would be based on a majority consensus.

Extensive debate followed Pierce's representation which was received with mixed reactions. There were those who felt that humanitarian considerations should dominate the decision and there were others who believed that Zionism should not be diverted, even in the slightest, from the goal of a Jewish state in Palestine. After lengthy discussion a resolution was adopted:

That it is the opinion of this meeting, that after the report of a commission to consider the offer by Britain, should it be satisfactory for settlement to Jews for colonizing, that we are in accord with the majority vote at the last Basle Congress to colonize and place our persecuted brethren there, under conditions proposed by the British government.¹⁰

The reaction of the local press to the Zionist Congress meetings in Basle was so favourable that it heightened an already strong sense of pride which Winnipeg Zionists experienced as participants in the Zionist dream. After the historic meeting with Asher Pierce an editorial appeared in the *Manitoba Free Press*, entitled, "The Zionist Movement":

Such is the Zionist desire, which many earnest men are working devotedly to bring to realization. The present congress at Basle was the sixth. These gatherings are the nearest approach that has been made to parliaments of the Jewish race. To Basle journey Jews from all parts of the world. The turbaned Morrocans, the Russian Pole in his peculiar costume, the Highland Jew of the Caucasus, the Persian Jew in the garb of his country meet at Basle on equal ground with the Reform rabbi from this continent, the South African financier, the Viennese journalist, the German professor. If the Zionist movement has done nothing else, it has at any rate once

⁹*Ibid.*, October 13, 1903.

¹⁰*Ibid.* and the *Tribune* of October 12, 1903.

more brought together the splintered fragments of the ancient race and has revived in them a feeling of solidarity.¹¹

In Manitoba, too, the Zionist movement helped bring together Jews from many and diverse backgrounds. Recognizing the need for their own centre where they could meet for lectures, discussions, and worship, Winnipeg Zionists rented quarters on Jarvis Avenue and in 1906 established the B'nai Zion Synagogue. By 1911 they had grown to a membership of several hundred. When Mme. Bella Pevsner, a travelling lecturer from the Bezalel Art School in Jerusalem, visited Winnipeg that year she lectured to large and eager audiences, illustrating her talks with slides and exhibiting paintings, rugs, and jewelry made by the students of the Bezalel School. Her visit created great excitement in the community and on the crest of this wave of enthusiasm the first official women's Zionist group, the B'not Zion Society was established.

In 1912 S. Frankel, educator and orator, arrived from New York City to join the teaching staff of the Winnipeg Talmud Torah. An intense Zionist, he proposed to Winnipeggers that they purchase land in Palestine co-operatively with the aim of settling there permanently as farmers. The Frankel project patterned after similar undertakings in Chicago, New York, and St. Louis became known as Achuzat Winnipeg.¹² Only a few local people followed Frankel to settle in the Holy Land but the educational effects of his proposal were important. He succeeded in enlisting the maximum interest and the vigorous support of a large corps of workers in the community on behalf of Zionism.

National recognition was granted to Winnipeg as an important Zionist centre when in July, 1917, it became the scene for the fifteenth annual convention of the Canadian Zionist Federation. Local Jewry observed a three-day holiday when they were hosts to three hundred and six delegates from across the country. On Sunday morning, July 1, 1917, the sessions opened in the Talmud Torah. M. J. Finkelstein, convention chairman, welcomed the delegates and Clarence I. De Sola, President of the Canadian Zionist Federation, gave the keynote address. De Sola recounted the many changes that were taking place in world Jewry, and the fall of European autocracies; he spoke on the significance for Zionism of the Russian Revolution. He warned the delegates not to heed anti-Zionists who predicted that Russia would now become a great haven of refuge for the Jews and asserted confi-

¹¹*Ibid.*, December 24, 1904.

¹²*Canadian Israelite*, November 7, 1921.

dently that Russian Jews would continue to work for a homeland in Palestine. De Sola glorified the recent entry of the British Army into Palestine and prayed for the Holy Land's redemption from the hands of the Turks. Finally, he expressed the hope and confidence that by the end of the war Britain would uphold the Jewish right to Palestine.

De Sola had good reason to believe that Britain had a deep sympathy with the Zionist movement. On May 29, 1917, a month before the conference, he conferred with the Hon. Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, during the British statesman's visit to Ottawa. Balfour had at that time intimated that official support by Britain would soon be forthcoming. Five months later, on November 2, 1917, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in which it gave its first official recognition of Jewish demands for a homeland in Palestine.

At the 1917 conference two decisions were made which were to be of considerable consequence to Canadian Zionism. The Hadassah Women's Organization had until then been a lone group of Zionist women in Toronto. A resolution was adopted which declared it a national body to be known as the Hadassah Organization of Canada. Another important resolution proposed by Bernard Joseph brought into existence the Canadian Young Judea Organization to which, in time, thousands of Jewish youth throughout the country were drawn.¹³

III

While General Zionists were striking roots in the Jewish community, Labour Zionists, too, were in the process of organizing themselves. The first official Labour Zionist group came into being in July, 1906, through the initiative of Aaron Osovsky, a Russian immigrant. In the B'nai Zion Synagogue Osovsky met like-minded, young Russian immigrants, among them I. Donner, S. Zivkin, M. Bereskin, P. Zvakin, and S. Itkin, who were interested in a socialist brand of Zionism and together they formulated plans for organization as well as an ambitious programme to give their plans substance. They undertook an education programme in Zionist philosophy, opening their first library in 1907. In the following year, their ranks considerably enlarged, they formed a drama group and presented a number of Yiddish plays. They organized a choir which mastered a repertoire of Hebrew and Yiddish music and performed frequently before Jewish audiences. By 1910, however, all of this cultural activity came to a stand-still

¹³Bernard (Dov) Joseph became a member of Israel's first cabinet in 1948 serving as Minister of Rationing.

when a considerable number of Labour Zionist members left Winnipeg to seek employment in other cities.

Labour Zionism was completely defunct until 1914 when S. Abrams, together with A. M. Levadie, succeeded in reviving the organization. The visit in 1915 of Isaac Ben Z'vi, who became the second President of the State of Israel, contributed considerably to the strength of Labour Zionism in Winnipeg. His lectures and the impact of his personality inspired many who stood on the periphery to join, and helped activate the original nucleus. Still greater impetus was brought to Labour Zionist ranks when Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky visited Winnipeg in 1917. Zhitlowsky advocated to the separate Jewish socialist groups in the city that they unite under the banner of Labour Zionism. So strong was his impress that he was able to bring a substantial membership into Labour Zionism and it became a leading force in the local Zionist world. Leading personalities who joined Labour Zionism at this time were J. A. Cherniak, I. Hestrin, I. Pearlman, Ben Sheps, M. A. Gray, Meyer Averbach, Marcus Hyman, W. Keller, Sam Green, and I. Stein.¹⁴

The Orthodox element in the community grouped itself in 1912 into a third Zionist camp, the Mizrachi Organization. The founding officers were Rabbi I. M. Kahanovich, S. B. Levin, Eli Cherniak, D. Israelovich, and L. Secter, and their membership was recruited from among the traditional Jews who were affiliated with the Orthodox synagogues of Winnipeg. Mizrachi's work was greatly enhanced by the visit of its outstanding leader, Rabbi Meir Berlin, who delivered a series of inspiring addresses in Winnipeg in February, 1914. He exhorted the local Mizrachi to engage in more vigorous activity "on behalf of the people of Israel according to the Torah of Israel."¹⁵ Mizrachi in Winnipeg became closely identified with the work of the local Talmud Torah; it raised funds for religious schools and institutions in Palestine and it supported the efforts of the Jewish National Fund. For many years it remained a small movement which served as a reminder to the community that the goals of Zionism could well be achieved in harmony with traditional Judaism. In 1938 I. B. Cohen came from Montreal to serve as principal of the Talmud Torah. A militant Mizrachi man, he harnessed the potential force of the Mizrachi Organization and shaped it into a significant segment of Zionist life. Co-workers in this effort with Cohen were Joseph Wolinsky, M.

¹⁴For complete treatment of Labour Zionism in Winnipeg see S. Belkin, *History of the Labor Zionist Movement in North America. I. Canada Section* (New York, 1955).

¹⁵*Canadian Israelite*, February 2, 1914.

Tessler, Jacob Steinberg, Isaac Greenberg, A. Beloff, I. Bogoch, and H. Sinaisky.

To integrate the far-flung activities of the sundry Zionist groups required the work of a co-ordinating body. In 1913 a loose-knit Zionist Council came into being but it functioned sporadically and ineffectively. It remained for M. J. Finkelstein to carry through the successful reorganization of a Zionist Council in December, 1915.¹⁶ The Council supervised Jewish National Fund campaigns, lecture series, public relations, the establishment of a library, and a host of other activities. At the end of his first term of office as President of the Zionist Council, M. J. Finkelstein was able to report with satisfaction that as a result of co-ordinated enterprise Winnipeg had become "Zionistic in almost every phase of its life."¹⁷ During 1916-17 the Zionist Council brought to Winnipeg Nahum Sokolov, Joseph Barondess, Dr. B. Mossinsohn, and Shmarya Levin. By their eloquence and their personal magnetism these leaders excited unbounded interest in Zion and elicited greater devotion to the Zionist cause than ever before.

The Balfour Declaration which had been intimated in guarded terms by Clarence I. De Sola at the national convention of July, 1917, became a fact in November of the same year. Jewish hearts the world over were gladdened and quickened by Britain's pledge to give active support to the establishment of a national home in Palestine. To give proper expression to local Zionists' appreciation of the Balfour Declaration a memorable mass meeting was held in the Industrial Bureau Hall where "amid a scene of the wildest enthusiasm" a resolution of gratitude to His Majesty's government was passed. Six thousand Jews gathered to hear Dr. Benzion Mossinsohn, noted Zionist leader, who was chief speaker at the event. Speaking in Yiddish, Dr. Mossinsohn declared that the Balfour Declaration was "the turning point in Jewish history." Sir James Aikins, Manitoba's Lieutenant Governor, expressed the belief that only in a land of their own could "the Jewish people rise to their full development—a country in which they can exercise their religion unopposed." He said, too, that he believed the Jews had the heart and the capacity to achieve a homeland, "let them arise and go."¹⁸

After the publication of the Balfour Declaration in November, 1917, Vladimir Jabotinsky stood ready to act upon a plan which he had

¹⁶Minutes of the Zionist Council of Winnipeg.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸*Manitoba Free Press*, June 10, 1918.

proposed a year earlier to the British government, namely, the creation of a Jewish battalion to fight under General Edmund Allenby in Egypt and Palestine. The British authorities accepted the proposal and Jews began to volunteer for military service with the new battalion. Canadian Zionists proceeded to recruit in earnest early in 1918. At the annual meeting of the Zionist Council on April 1, 1918, the plan for recruitment of a unit in this region was approved.¹⁹ A mass meeting was convened for the purpose of recruitment at the Queen's Theatre on April 8. Before the meeting a large parade was held in which the first recruits marched, followed by "enthusiastic thousands," to the Queen's Theatre where "the crowd jammed into the hall after the boys, and in a few minutes there was not an inch of untenanted space in the whole theatre." Misha Arake Cohen, Indian-born Jew and Winnipeg barrister, told the audience of the progress made in recruiting locally. He pointed out that the Canadian authorities were giving every assistance to make the Jewish battalion a success and that permission had been granted to recruit from all except men already in uniform. Several young men responded immediately, being particularly inspired by Rabbi Herbert J. Samuel's announcement that he, too, was volunteering for service.²⁰ After a farewell banquet on May 7 sixty local volunteers left for training and joined the Jewish battalion in Palestine. They were privileged to enter Jerusalem under Allenby on September 18, 1918. And so another link was forged, binding the Jews of Manitoba to Zion.

IV

At the fifteenth national conference of the Zionist Federation of Canada held in Winnipeg in 1917, Hadassah was proclaimed a national organization. In the meantime, during World War I, Mrs. S. Stockhammer had organized the Red Mogen David, a women's organization which served as an auxiliary to the Jewish legionnaires fighting in Palestine. Hadassah did not function fully until the end of the war but in 1919 there was a concerted effort to co-ordinate all local women's Zionist groups into a major organization which was Hadassah. The Red Mogen David was requested to adopt the Hadassah platform. It did so and was followed by other women's groups. At an open meeting of Zionist women in Winnipeg Miss Goldie Finesilver was elected first president of the Winnipeg Chapter of Hadassah.

The first major challenge placed before Hadassah was to assist

¹⁹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, April 1, 1918.

²⁰Ibid., April 8, 23, 1918.

the many thousands of Palestinian Jews who were homeless, starved, and ill as a result of the Allied-Turkish War which had ravaged Palestine. Through its Helping Hand Fund Hadassah sent gifts of food, clothing, and medicine and helped to re-establish many of the destitute Jews of Palestine. National Hadassah undertook in 1921 to found the School for Domestic and Agricultural Science for Girls at Nahalal. Mrs. Maxwell Rady of Winnipeg, elected first vice-president for western Canada in 1921, spearheaded the education and fund-raising aspects of this important project throughout the western provinces. Members of Hadassah in Winnipeg played a significant role at the 1924 national convention in Montreal when Mrs. H. E. Wilder, Dominion vice-president, assisted by Mesdames Hyman Sokolov, M. H. Halparin, and J. M. Bernstein drafted a broad programme of activities for the organization. And now Winnipeg Hadassah began to expand in size and scope. By 1925 seven chapters had come into being, necessitating the formation of a Hadassah Council. In 1927 Winnipeg Hadassah were hostesses to the Fifth Annual Hadassah Convention. At this convention Mrs. A. J. Freiman, O.B.E., who had just returned from Palestine, reported on Hadassah projects in that country. In the years which followed Winnipeg Hadassah supported the many projects undertaken through their national organization: Keren Hayesod, the Jewish National Fund, the Tuberculosis Hospital, the Moza Convalescent Home, and the Sharon Valley redemption project. In 1933 when Henrietta Szold created the great Youth Aliyah project as a means of rescuing children from Nazi-dominated Europe, Canadian Hadassah rallied wholeheartedly under the leadership of Mrs. D. P. Gotlieb, western vice-president, worked heroically and gave generously. Hadassah in Manitoba reached fullest recognition when Mrs. Gotlieb was elected national president in 1951.²¹

A chapter of the Pioneer Women's Organization was established in Winnipeg in 1925; it was closely identified with the work of Labour Zionism. Leaders in this effort were Mesdames Miriam Hestrin, Sarah Green, Etta Pasicoff, L. Nemenoff, D. Yanovsky, and J. Robins. In a period of ten years there were established fourteen separate Pioneer Women's clubs in the city. Their work was devoted to supporting farms, vocational schools, convalescent centres for women and children, kindergartens, and nurseries in Palestine. Their record was a noble one and they thrived vigorously on the community scene.²²

²¹S. L. Lazareck, ed., *Western Canadian Hadassah Silver Jubilee Volume* (Winnipeg, 1942).

²²Melvin Fenson, "The Pioneer Women," *Winnipeg Jewish Post*, August 17, 1950, p. 20.

V

1920 was an outstandingly exuberant year in Manitoba's Zionist history. On April 25 a large gathering was assembled in Winnipeg's Allen Theatre at the opening of the Palestine Restoration Fund. During the rally a historic telegram reached the chairman, H. E. Wilder. It read:

The Palestine Conference at San Remo has given Great Britain a mandate over Palestine, leaving it to France and England to arrange boundaries. The Balfour Declaration, guaranteeing the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, has been embodied in the Peace Treaty with Turkey. The rights of the Jews in Palestine are safeguarded.

People applauded wildly; they rose from their places and embraced one another; they dashed to the stage and read the telegram to be reassured of its reality. It was announced, then and there, by the chairman that a great public demonstration would take place on May 19.

On that day ten thousand people marched on foot and another three thousand travelled in cars down Main Street and Portage Avenue in a public demonstration of thanksgiving. Gentiles joined with Jewish neighbours in their jubilation. Jewish shops were closed for the day. Unusual floats represented "Judea Thankful," "The Tribes," "Hadassah," and "Dr. Theodor Herzl." From Portage Avenue the giant procession wound its way to Carlton Street stopping in front of the *Free Press* building where an honour guard, consisting of veteran Zionists Aaron Osovsky, Captain William Tobias, Rabbi Herbert J. Samuel, H. E. Wilder, and Judge Bregstone of Chicago, mounted a balcony and there presented the publisher with a large blue and white flag. In turn H. E. Wilder was given the afternoon edition of the paper which had just rolled off the press and Wilder held it up to the vast gathering whose joy was complete when they saw a blue and white Star of David which covered the full front page. During the proceedings the Zionist ensign waved from the building's flag pole.

In its issue of the following day, May 20, 1920, the *Free Press* wrote, in an editorial:

The intense national feeling of the Jew and his love for the country from which he has been so long an exile, could to some extent be judged by the impressive demonstration made by the Jewish people of Winnipeg yesterday to celebrate the liberation of Palestine.

The Jews saw the flag of their nation floating beside the flag of the Empire, and the prolonged cheers with which the event was greeted

indicated the depth of satisfaction which the liberation of their famous country has brought to their hearts.

Winnipeg congratulates its Jewish citizens on the great event they celebrated yesterday. The night has been long, but it was their good fortune to see the new day dawn.

Zionist effort now became dynamic. Extraordinary and unstinting energy was poured into fund-raising enterprises. From 1920 to 1925 particular emphasis was placed on Jewish National Fund endeavours to redeem precious dunams of land in Palestine. Shares of the Jewish Colonial Trust were sold; many names were inscribed in the J.N.F. Golden Book. A highlight of 1925 was the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This occasion was celebrated in Winnipeg in a farewell gathering honouring Dr. Guthrie Perry and Max Stein-kopf, who were leaving to participate in the Jerusalem ceremonies. On their return, both men lectured widely to Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in Manitoba, about Palestine and its achievements.

VI

Winnipeg was honoured for a second time when in July, 1925, delegates from across Canada gathered in the city for a national Zionist convention. It was a memorable gathering with Menachem Mendel Ussishkin as the honoured guest. In his address to the delegates gathered in the Royal Alexandra Hotel, Ussishkin placed before Canadian Jewry the challenge of redeeming Emek Hepher in Palestine at a cost of \$1,000,000. The delegates committed themselves enthusiastically. Louis Lipsky, American Zionist leader, also present at the convention expressed profound admiration for Canadian Zionists. The outstandingly interesting facet of this convention was the fact that Ussishkin's appeal was made neither in English nor in Yiddish—it was delivered in Hebrew.

Winnipeg joined the national United Palestine Appeal in 1928, the year it was launched in Canada. U.P.A. became an annual undertaking and was supported by the various Zionist groups in the community. In 1938, Winnipeg carried out the first experiment in Canada of joint fund-raising for local and Palestine needs under the sponsorship of Winnipeg's newly established Jewish Welfare Fund. This united effort was interrupted in 1941 when U.P.A. returned to an independent campaign. Nine years later in 1950, the United Palestine

Appeal was wedded once more to a joint United Jewish Appeal organization which has continued ever since.²³

Over the years an overwhelming percentage of Winnipeg Jewish residents identified unequivocally with one or another of the Zionist ideologies. At no stage was there question of divided loyalties. Loyalty to Zionism was understood to be synonymous with loyalty to Judaism and as such it was straightforward, strong, and clear.

VII

The impact of the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948, on the Winnipeg Jewish community may be gauged by its more direct impact on such areas of activity as fund-raising, affiliation with Zionist organizations, and Zionist youth activities.

The impetus for fund-raising reflected the general tone of emergency which continues to emanate from Israel as a result of the post-World War II refugee situation and subsequent crises such as the Sinai campaign and the Rumanian refugee situation of 1957. There is no question but that the sustained level of giving to the United Jewish Appeal, which provides funds for local institutions and Israel, reflected the impact of Israel and its immigrant settlement needs. However, it was by no means the exclusive effort of the local Zionists that determined the success of the local fund-raising efforts. The success was in considerable part due to the efforts of Jewish Welfare Fund leaders of Winnipeg who were not necessarily identified with the Zionist movement.

In so far as Zionist organization affiliation was concerned, membership in the General Zionist clubs has declined from an 1950 enrolment of 600 men in 1950 to a registration of 425 in 1961. The Labour Zionists and religious Mizrachi Zionists have never expanded their affiliations beyond the older, Yiddish-speaking people in the community, a group which is steadily declining. Their success can be measured only in retention of existing numbers.

The Zionist youth organizations have declined since 1946. The immediate cause of the decline was the preliminary factor of departure for Israel of senior youth movement leaders. Subsequently, with the development of Winnipeg's Y.M.H.A. centre, its competitive attractions drew the overwhelming percentage of Jewish youngsters. And

²³Melvin Fenson, "Jewish Welfare Fund," *Winnipeg Jewish Post*, August 17, 1950, p. 18.

this along with the simultaneous growth of the two modern Conservative synagogues, each with a synagogue-centred youth programme, and the spurt in the development of B'nai B'rith's youth organizations, sounded the death knell of Zionist youth activities. Summer camps for youth, once the domain of the Zionist youth movements, declined and in 1950 the Y.M.H.A. centre assumed direction of the summer camp established thirty years previously by the B'nai B'rith Organization. The remnants of Zionist camping disappeared when the last surviving camp, founded by Habonim, was absorbed under the wing of the Winnipeg Hebrew School.

The only growth in affiliated Zionist activities has been scored among the women, associated with Hadassah, Pioneer Women, and to a much lesser degree, Mizrachi Women. The past decade has seen each of these movements attract new members to what is now largely a service and fund-raising type of organization. Hadassah numbers about 1,600 members in Winnipeg today; Pioneer Women, about half that number. In each case, membership has grown by about 80 per cent in the past decade, largely as a result of the impact of the new State of Israel.

The enrolment of non-Zionist groups in fund-raising for Israel is an outcome of the establishment of Israel Government Bond sales organizations in Winnipeg. As in the case of the United Jewish Appeal, where only in two out of eleven campaigns the over-all chairman was selected from the ranks of identified Zionists, so with Israel Bond sales. Its leadership passed from official Zionist sponsorship to areas of general Jewish service and fund-raising activity. Israel Bond drives sold \$475,000 in 1953, declined to a low of \$250,000 in 1959, and are heading for a \$400,000 attainment in 1961, according to official sources.

Winnipeg's Jewish community never developed a group of anti-Zionists. There have been elements less concerned with Israel than others, but the extent of their disinterest has been to resist the Israel Bond sales effort on the ground that their philanthropic gifts through the U.J.A. testify to their sense of responsibility for world-wide Jewish needs; that investment programmes such as Israel Bonds do not impress them as a wise business programme. The outstanding examples of this pattern, and they are few, have found disaffection in their own ranks, their wives often having been leaders in the women's effort for Bonds.

Winnipeg's Shaarey Zedek Congregation at one time, in the late forties, maintained that its service was purely religious, and that it

had no licence to apply its influence towards persuading members to discharge their communal and philanthropic duties. This obstacle was removed when the Jewish National Fund, a traditional world-wide campaign engaged in collecting small sums to purchase land in Israel for Jewish settlement, sent a representative to Winnipeg in 1958 who effectively influenced Shaarey Zedek's non-Zionist leadership with the non-ideological, non-political appeal of the aims and objectives of land-redemption work in Israel. Associated with the campaigning involved, in which leadership of this major synagogue group was enrolled, was the development of a series of annual pilgrimages to Israel on the part of 80 to 160 influential men and women. During these visits, philanthropic projects named for the contributors were dedicated in Israel.

Concern for Israel may be seen also in the number of young men who volunteered in 1948 for service in Israel's armed forces on the eve of statehood. Of the forty Jewish volunteers from Manitoba, two fell in action and three remained as permanent settlers in Israel. Not more than five of the forty volunteers had any previous Zionist affiliation or held Zionist youth movement membership. Since statehood, forty-one young Winnipeggers have moved to Israel, under the aegis of Zionist youth organizations and mainly to *kibbutzim*, the collective farm settlements. The overwhelming majority of these have subsequently left the *kibbutzim* for positions in city and town. In 1961 there are none in Manitoba planning to settle in Israel.

Zionism as an organized body in Manitoba would appear to be on the wane. Premier David Ben Gurion's analogy of organizational Zionism as the "scaffolding" that has been superseded by the State of Israel, the "structure," would appear to be valid as one observes developments in the Manitoba Jewish community.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

OF ALL THE NEW AND STRANGE ENCOUNTERS which the Jewish immigrants to Manitoba had in their early years, perhaps the most bewildering of all was the experience of politics in a democratic land. In their native countries in eastern Europe, government was an instrument of and for the ruling powers. Its machinery was autocratic and not to be challenged. When its benefits were not unilateral, they were vague and remote for the ordinary man. Finally, government represented a threatening spectre, a destructive interference in the daily round of existence. The fear of an unexpected call to arms, of a new tax, or of a sudden arrest for unknown crimes had conditioned immigrants to an attitude of dread and suspicion when they considered the role of a government. And, yet, they hoped that in Canada, the land of freedom, life would be better. They had heard that in the political utopias which lay across the Atlantic, men were free from governmental tyranny, free from the whimsical oppression of the landed gentry, free from fear, and above all, free to determine the direction of their lives for themselves.

What then did they find here? In place of the capricious noblemen they found political bosses in whose control were often the means needed to earn a livelihood, who in return for votes promised and delivered became the protectors, the benevolent fixers for a variety of problems. Nor was this electoral corruption limited to any single group.¹ It was a device used by both Conservative and Liberal parties and it was practised without ethnic discrimination upon all groups of newcomers—gullible, helpless people who, penetrated and surrounded by this overpowering malignancy, could find no escape except upward through growth into greater political maturity.

In some, the old hopelessness added to the new helplessness produced indifference. For others the only realistic interpretation of what appeared to be inevitable corruption was a philosophy of cynicism. But there were idealists, too, who believed that in a democracy it was incumbent upon every man to work to correct flagrant wrongs in public life.

¹See W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (University of Toronto Press, 1957), particularly chapters 12 and 14.

I

What alternative had any such hopefuls who were ready to volunteer mind and heart in the fight for true democratic government? One choice for political affiliation was the Conservative Party, the very group which, responding to moral pressures generating from England and aware of Canada's need to populate and develop the length of its vast domain, had in 1882 extended its sovereign hospitality to homeless Jews. And, yet, this same party was clearly interested in limiting itself to British-born elements. It appealed for its support largely if not exclusively to the Anglo-Saxon and Orange vote and agreed to the admission of foreign-born elements only so long as they constituted a small proportion of the total population. This predisposition towards ethnic favouritism helped push many a tottering voter over the fence into the Liberal camp. Needless to say, many entered that camp through the front gate on their own two feet, politically speaking. Because for many years the Liberal policy on immigration was indeed liberal and cordial. Conservatives opened the doors of Canada to eastern European immigrants only under special circumstances. Sir John A. Macdonald, prime minister of Canada during the great immigration years of 1882-3, agreed to invite Jews only out of sound and practical considerations and then with some reservations and with unflattering condescension. On the other hand, Sir Wilfrid Laurier who became the Liberal prime minister in 1896 was enthusiastic to proposals of Jewish settlements in Canada² and Clifford Sifton, his Minister of the Interior, offered Canada's hospitality on a large scale to European immigrants of all origins.

There were, of course, occasional outstanding exceptions among Conservatives and Liberals in their approach to immigration. One of these was Conservative Alexander T. Galt, High Commissioner to London during the Macdonald administration, at whose insistence Canada's doors were opened to Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1882.³ Another Conservative, Thomas N. Daly, Minister of the Interior under Prime Minister John S. D. Thompson, encouraged Jewish immigration and settlement in western Canada. In a heated debate in Parliament, Joseph Martin, newly-elected Liberal member from Manitoba criticized Daly's immigration programme and charged that "a lot of Jews had been brought to Calgary at great expense, under the impression that they were going to become farmers, whereas

²H. Wolofsky, "Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Canada's Immigration Policy," *Canadian Jewish Yearbook*, 1941-2, pp. 92-7.

³See chapter III of this volume.

such men could not be farmers." Martin maintained that they were only pedlar material and that the money spent in bringing them into Canada from the United States was wholly wasted. But Daly defended his department's policy pointing out that the Jewish settlers came well recommended by C.P.R. agents and by Rev. T. D. Phillips who had observed them during the time of their stay in Chicago.⁴

Ironically, after Joseph Martin's election to Parliament, the Conservatives charged that he was elected by the foreign vote. The Liberal spokesman, the *Manitoba Free Press*, took the sting out of the foreign vote charge in a cogent defense of the voting rights of all Canadians:

A Conservative contemporary says that Mr. Martin was elected by the Icelanders, Jews, Scandinavians, Hungarians and all the riff-raff of the city. As many of the Conservatives and independents who voted for Mr. Martin were natives of Canada and Great Britain and were not of the other nationalities mentioned, it follows that it is they who compose our contemporary's riff-raff column. This does not sound complimentary, but it is better to be a riff-raff vote and like a riff-raff vote, than stand where sinners congregate and men profanely run in repeaters and send up chamberlains to steal an election. After all men of the several nationalities enumerated and the riff-raff referred to were acting in what they believed to be the best interests of their country, and ought not to be abused because they exercised the intelligence given them by their Maker and the rights given them by the constitution.⁵

The fact is that Jewish voters were to be found in both political parties. Annual delegates lists of the Conservative and Liberal conventions held in the province reveal that Jewish delegates participated in both camps at all times.⁶

II

In Winnipeg's civic elections of 1895 a Jewish candidate stood for aldermanic office for the first time. Louis Wertheim, pioneer resident and businessman, was one of four candidates in Ward Five. Third in line in the final tally of votes, Wertheim was defeated.⁷ Almost a decade passed before the next Jewish candidate stood for aldermanic office in Winnipeg.

Still the political interest of Jews in Winnipeg continued to grow

⁴*Manitoba Free Press*, May 8, 1894.

⁵*Ibid.*, December 12, 1893.

⁶See *Manitoba Free Press*, June 29, 1887; July 8, 1887; February 22, 1888; December 4, 1889; November 25, 1893; December 12, 1893; January 12, 1897; July 21, 1903; January 7, 1904; November 23, 1904.

⁷*Ibid.*, December 18, 1895. The vote tally was: Block, 545; MacDonald, 350; Wertheim, 146; Hamilton, 108.

and in February, 1896, they organized the Independent Jewish Political Club. The basic purpose of this organization was to offer the opportunity to candidates of both parties to present their platforms before Jewish voters. Isaac Barrett, chairman, urged that the outlook of both parties be carefully considered and that the membership "cast their votes for the party of progress and the one which would be of greatest benefit to the country."⁸ The proposal of a forum for candidates was an excellent one but, in practice, it caused great friction and divided its membership into opposing camps. The result was that the Independent Jewish Political Club did not survive long. Several years after its disappearance two separate political clubs were established, the Jewish Conservative Club⁹ and the Jewish Liberal Club.¹⁰

The issues debated by the Jewish political clubs during the campaign preceding the 1904 federal elections reflected the basic differences in the platforms of the two major political parties. At a rally of the Jewish Liberal Club held for D. W. Bole, Liberal candidate for Parliament, David Balcovske, one of the Club's leaders, asserted that "under the Conservative regime existence entailed continuous struggle," while under the Liberal government since Laurier became Prime Minister in 1896 "the pulse of industrial life acted quickly in the trail of the Hon. Clifford Sifton's immigration policy."¹¹ At the same rally Sam Finkelstein charged that the Conservatives were anti-immigration citing, by way of proof, the words of a Conservative leader who had said, "we want the English, Scotch and Irish. Germans are good settlers, and the French. But we do not want Galicians, Doukhobors, Russians, Jews and Finns."¹² The Liberals were wooing Jewish voters almost entirely on the strength of their immigration platform.

During the same campaign the Jewish Conservative Club held a meeting in Edward Hall to sponsor their candidate for Parliament, W. Sanford Evans, editor of the *Winnipeg Morning Telegram*. Moses Finkelstein, one of the Club's leaders, addressed the meeting and referred to a variety of political issues relevant to the elections. One of these was the achievement by a provincial Conservative administration of the extension of the Grand Trunk Pacific across Manitoba. Other issues were the increase of property values, honest government,

⁸*Ibid.*, February 4, 1896.

⁹Leaders of the Jewish Liberal Club were David Balcovske, Leon Abramovich, Sam Finkelstein, and Joseph J. Goodman.

¹⁰Leaders in the Jewish Conservative Club were Moses Finkelstein, A. Skaletar, and J. Rosenthal.

¹¹*Manitoba Free Press*, November 1, 1904.

¹²*Ibid.*

and a hospitable immigration policy during that administration.¹³ Clearly, for Conservatives, immigration was only one plank in a general platform, and they sought to counter-balance the claims of the Liberals by focusing attention on their own achievements in Manitoba under R. P. Roblin's Conservative government.

During the 1904 campaign, Charles Schachter, Winnipeg Jewish resident, wrote a letter to the *Manitoba Free Press* to protest the use of his name as a signatory to an article titled "Call To Hebrew Voters To Attend" which appeared in the *Morning Telegram* of October 28, 1904. Schachter wrote:

I noticed in the *Telegram* an article headed "Call To Hebrew Voters To Attend" and among the names of the committee I had seen my own. I will ask you kindly to make those who used my name understand that as a citizen I will not allow the use of my name by ward-heelers and cheap politicians. The Hebrews are voting as Canadians and no one man can influence them. I don't know of an existing Moses who can claim the distinction of their leadership, and the one who calls himself their leader is betraying his party and makes a false statement.¹⁴

Schachter's protest reflected a growing objection to Jewish and other ethnic bloc alignments and there were many who shared his point of view. This concern was echoed and re-echoed in 1909 by B'nai B'rith of Winnipeg and in 1911 by editorials in the *Canadian Israelite*. Both advocated that Jews vote not as members of an ethnic group but as individual Canadian citizens. Their demands were largely responsible for the elimination of Jewish political clubs in the community.

In 1904, ten years after Louis Wertheim's defeat, a second Jew, accepted the aldermanic candidacy for North Winnipeg. He was Moses Finkelstein, a respected Winnipeg Jewish businessman who had come from Russia as a child in 1882. A newspaper wrote of him that "for a quarter of a century he has been a citizen and has become a typical westerner."¹⁵ Educated in Winnipeg schools, he was a fine athlete and known for his attainments in several sports. He served as president of the Zionist Society and the Young Men's Hebrew Association. He was highly regarded both in the general community and by his fellow Jews.

¹³*Morning Telegram*, November 1, 1904.

¹⁴*Manitoba Free Press*, November 1, 1904. This was corroborated in interviews with M. J. Finkelstein, Q.C., and S. Hart Green, Q.C. Both of them active in the Liberal party they were joined by Max Steinkopf, a Conservative, in denouncing ethnic bloc associations.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, December 10, 1904.

In an article which he wrote for the *Reform Advocate* in 1914, Moses Finkelstein described his entry into politics: "It was in 1904 that some of our people began to think seriously that we reached the stage where we should have recognition, that we were paying taxes in the city to a very large amount, and that we should have a representative in the City Council."¹⁶ In his campaign Finkelstein pledged that if elected he would concern himself with the sanitation and construction needs of the North End. He promised to work for more bridges and for additional paved streets and sidewalks.¹⁷

On this platform Moses Finkelstein was elected the first Jewish alderman in Manitoba. It was an important day in the life of the Jewish community. Finkelstein's victory aroused in Jews the desire to participate more actively in the arena of politics. Beginning with this period Jews were more and more willing to run for public office in civic, provincial, and even in national elections.

But they were soon to discover that politics went beyond the excitement of a campaign and the glory of victory. Politics could be stormy and sordid. In July, 1905, Joseph J. Goodman, an able and ambitious young journalist, communal leader, and politician, was suddenly arrested on a charge filed by the Manitoba Attorney General's office. Goodman was accused of granting a certificate of naturalization to one George Sobal before Sobal had fulfilled the necessary three years' residence in Canada.¹⁸ The Jewish community was up in arms. At a meeting of the Dr. Gaster Benevolent Society, of which Goodman was secretary, John Levin moved a strong protest "at the absolutely unwarranted action which had been made for purely political reasons."¹⁹ It was seconded by J. Goldenberg who said that Goodman's arrest "was an insult to each man of his race in this city."

Liberal party circles in Winnipeg were determined to make of Goodman's case a *cause célèbre*. In this they were supported by the *Free Press* which in its editorials accused the Attorney General's department of base attempts to discredit Goodman and through him the Liberal Party.

The average man will look at the case from the viewpoint of the unfortunate defendant. Here was a man who had been guilty of no offence; yet on the flimsiest evidence he was arrested, haled to the court, blazoned

¹⁶*Reform Advocate* (Winnipeg Issue), 1914, Chicago.

¹⁷*Manitoba Free Press*, December 13, 1904. Campaigners for Moses Finkelstein were M. Wodlinger, J. J. Goodman, Leon Abramovich, David Ripstein, H. A. Andrews, D. D. Woods, A. A. McArthur, Ben Zimmerman, and Jake Udow.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, July 15, 1905.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, July 13, 1905.

to the world as a criminal, harassed in mind and person and obliged to defend himself out of his slender personal resources against all the power and wealth of the Crown. His treatment was unfair, unjust and tyrannical; and he is entitled to public sympathy.²⁰

More than a week later the *Free Press* carried a full-page story in which it carefully documented the Goodman case and analysed its implication. It claimed that an examination of the Conservative organ, the *Evening Tribune*, would disclose that Goodman had been tried before his case had ever come to court.²¹ The *Free Press* called this "a sample of attorney-generalism,"²² and concluded, "if the Attorney-General's department had desired last July to do justice in place of being determined to use the machinery of justice for the persecution of Liberals, it could have found out by an hour's impartial investigation that there was no vestige of a case against Mr. Goodman."²³

The *Free Press* spoke from the vantage point of victory. When Goodman had stood trial, earlier that month, the case against him had collapsed entirely. In the address from the bench, Mr. Justice Perdue said that in the court's opinion the evidence failed to prove anything against Goodman. His Lordship could not place the least reliance on the witnesses who had given evidence for the crown and Goodman was exonerated without a stain upon his character.²⁴

III

Two factors now caused a marked shift of a large portion of the Jewish population into the Liberal fold. One was the Goodman incident. The other was a large influx of Jewish immigrants from Rumania and Russia. These had been admitted to Canada as a result of a vigorous campaign for European immigrants conducted by Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in the Laurier government. The ethnic groups were gaining in size and constituted an ever growing proportion of the electorate.²⁵ It was becoming increasingly evident that the votes of ethnic groups had a considerable influence on the outcome of elections and that they must be wooed to be won. It was clear, too, that the minorities would require and expect more representation out of their own groups in the several legislative branches of the government.

²⁰*Ibid.*, November 17, 1905.

²¹*Evening Telegram*, July 10, 1905.

²²The Attorney General was Colin H. Campbell.

²³*Manitoba Free Press*, November 28, 1905.

²⁴*Ibid.*, November 17, 1905.

²⁵By 1906 Manitoba's population was 365,000, of whom 73,000 made up the ethnic groups, i.e. French, Mennonite, Icelandic, Ukrainian, Jewish.

In 1910 the Liberal party prevailed upon S. Hart Green, a young Canadian lawyer, who had come from St. John's, New Brunswick, in 1907, to stand as candidate for a seat in the Manitoba legislature. The constituency for which Green stood was the North End of Winnipeg in which Jewish voters formed only a portion of the total electorate. The issues with which Green dealt were: neglect of the North End of Winnipeg by the Roblin administration which Green charged with being "in league with the big real estate operators whose interests lay in other parts of the city"; the need to break the monopoly of the then privately-owned Winnipeg Street Railway Company, distributor of electrical power in the city; the failure of the Roblin administration to adequately finance the education programme in the province; the possibility that, unless properly prodded, the Roblin administration might not implement the new Workmen's Compensation Act.²⁶

S. Hart Green was a strange phenomenon to Jewish and non-Jewish voters alike. For the first time non-Jews were confronted by a Canadian-born Jew who spoke to them in their own language and who used their own frame of reference. They recognized, moreover, that in spite of his youthfulness, he was prepared to be a "David" against the "Goliath" Roblin administration. For Jewish audiences Green was a complete enigma. Here was a young Jew who could not speak a word of Yiddish, the language of his people. This could have constituted a serious obstacle in that era but Green's sincerity apparently compensated for this lack. He was elected and became the first Jewish member of a Legislature in Canada.²⁷

In his maiden speech before the Manitoba legislature, S. Hart Green said:

One of the greatest attributes of the Canadian constitution and chief bulwarks of Canada's greatness was the fact that under the flag all men were equal, and one who had sworn allegiance, or his descendants, could rise to the highest position in the land and was equal to those born under the flag. As the representative of the most cosmopolitan constituency in the province, in which over thirty languages are spoken I can assure the house that in after-years some of the best men Canada would produce, would spring from the melting pot in which these different races were being blended into Canadians.²⁸

During his term of office Green was an outspoken critic of the Roblin administration. He questioned the financial dealings of the provincial government and charged officials with having exploited their positions

²⁶*Manitoba Free Press*, July 1, 1910.

²⁷*Ibid.*, February 17, 1911.

²⁸*Ibid.*, March 9, 1911.

to personal advantage, particularly in the sale of land which had belonged to the province. Twenty-four years of age when elected, S. Hart Green was a youthful gadfly in the Manitoba legislature. He questioned government decisions relentlessly and was, in turn, assailed by Conservative spokesmen in the legislature. Attorney General Colin H. Campbell on one such occasion suggested tartly "that Mr. Green should first become a gentleman before he dared to speak."²⁹ For the four years during which he sat in the Manitoba legislature (1911-14) he was an articulate champion of Liberal policy.

The Conservative party was now eager to sponsor a Conservative counterpart to S. Hart Green in the Jewish community. Elias R. Levinson who had come from Australia in 1903 was the man whom they chose. Levinson had studied in Melbourne and had practised law in that city for fifteen years. Shortly after his arrival in Winnipeg he was recognized as a man with ability and was appointed City Solicitor.³⁰ He participated actively in Conservative politics and in 1912 was appointed Crown Prosecutor for two years. Levinson, was in effect, the Conservative answer to Green.

IV

Between the years 1900 and 1912 socialist and labour movements became part of the Canadian scene. With the rapid development of industry, labour and union groups began to appear and there was a growing awareness of the role which the workingman could play in Canadian political life. There was a growing recognition, too, by the working class that in order to gain benefits and win rights for themselves they must make their demands through organized political action. In this climate of thought the Social Democratic party and the Socialist party were established in 1904. An important and substantial element in Canadian socialism were British and European socialists who migrated to Canada during this decade.³¹

After 1903 the Manitoba Jewish community also reflected this change. Some of the immigrants from Russia who had participated in clandestine efforts against the Czarist régime came with philosophies of anarchism, socialism, nihilism, and variations of these. In Canada they were free to organize into political parties and to test their ideas

²⁹*Ibid.*, March 9, 1911.

³⁰In 1906 the Manitoba Legislature passed an act amending the Law Society Act to permit the admission of Levinson, an Australian, to the Manitoba Bar. (See *Manitoba Free Press*, December 1, 1906.)

³¹Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 305.

through the medium of the free ballot. The socialist and labour groups in the city were creating a third political force. Jewish socialists identified with one or another of these and added considerable ferment to a political scene already turbulent.

The first active involvement of the Jewish Social Democrats in politics was in 1906 when they joined other socialists in support of Winnipeg Street Railway employees who were out on strike for union recognition and higher wages. In 1908 they helped campaign for Houston, the socialist candidate for the legislature. In the Winnipeg civic elections of 1911 they nominated their own candidate for the Winnipeg School Board, Charles Salzman. His platform contained seven major proposals for Winnipeg's school system:

- (1) That three hours of school time per week be devoted by students to the study of their native tongue.
- (2) Free medical attention.
- (3) Free textbooks and scribblers for children.
- (4) That evening classes be conducted at high schools and technical schools for poor children who must work during the day.
- (5) That public schools be available for concerts, lectures, and public gatherings for the community every evening.
- (6) That teachers be paid adequate salaries and that they be encouraged to carry forward their own studies during summer holidays.
- (7) That no religious instruction whatsoever be permitted in the schools.³²

In spite of this broad platform Salzman was defeated. The religious Jews who constituted the majority in the Jewish community were opposed to "free-thinking" candidates. In addition to this, solidarity was lacking within the small socialist group who sponsored Salzman. According to an editorial which analysed the reasons for Salzman's defeat an important contributing factor was "the narrow-minded contention of Salzman's fellow socialists that he had had no right to campaign in the synagogues."³³ The editorial scolded that as long as such bigotry persists among local socialists they could never expect the support of religious Jews.

In December, 1912, Altar Skaletar, active community leader and firm Conservative, campaigned for the Ward 5 aldermanic seat. Skaletar was an early Jewish homesteader from Russia who settled first in the Morden district, later in Winnipeg. He assisted many Jewish immigrants in a variety of ways and gained a grateful and loyal following. The *Canadian Israelite* gave Skaletar its strong support and urged Jewish voters to rise above narrow partisanship to elect him. "The

³²*Canadian Israelite*, December 1, 1911.

³³*Ibid.*, December 14, 1911.

North End has been too long neglected by our civic fathers. Sanitary conditions are appalling; street conditions are horrible. There is need for a forthright spokesman on our behalf."³⁴ Skaletar was elected by an easy majority and became the second Jewish alderman in Winnipeg. Among the measures which he sponsored in the City Council were the establishment of a free employment bureau, one day off each week for the city police force, and free ice for the poor of the city during the summer months.

The next Jewish candidate to campaign in Ward 5 was Moses Abrahamson who ran for the office of school trustee. A learned gentleman, Abrahamson was for several years the publisher of the *Canadian Israelite*. In this capacity he was at the vortex of Jewish community endeavour. He was elected a school trustee in 1913 and served ably as the first Jewish member of the Board of Education.³⁵

During the three years between 1911 and 1913 the Winnipeg Jewish community was represented by three elected officials, S. Hart Green in the Manitoba legislature, Alter Skaletar on the City Council, and Moses Abrahamson on the School Board. In addition Elias R. Levinson held the appointed office of Crown Prosecutor of Winnipeg.

Before the Provincial elections of 1914 S. Hart Green announced that he would not seek office again. Several Jewish candidates were eager to step in to campaign for his seat in the legislature. The political victories of Jewish candidates during the past few years had encouraged a number of aspirants to seek office. Alderman Skaletar made it known that he would be "a willing candidate" but his offer was declined. Max J. Finkelstein was announced as the candidate for the Liberal party. Charles Salzman ran on the Social Democrat ticket and Marcus Hyman stood for office as an Independent.

Max J. Finkelstein, a favourite in the Jewish community, was considered a logical successor to Green, but as the campaign began to reach a fever pitch Finkelstein was forced to withdraw because of illness. Hyman and Salzman did not command extensive, popular support and both were defeated. There was no Jewish representative in the legislature until 1927 when Captain William B. Tobias, World War I Military Cross recipient, lawyer, and sportsman, was elected to the Manitoba legislature on the Conservative ticket.

³⁴*Ibid.*, December 5, 1912.

³⁵Simon Abrahamson, son of Moses Abrahamson, was Canada's first Jewish Rhodes Scholar.

Another in the series of exciting electoral battles in Ward 5 took place when A. A. Heaps, Winnipeg upholsterer and socialist, undertook singlehandedly to expose the irregular vote-getting practices of Skaletar's supporters. As a result of his house cleaning, Heaps succeeded Skaletar as the aldermanic candidate. Appreciating his zeal in exposing the violations of the Elections Act a large majority swept Heaps into office. He served ably and was re-elected alderman for each succeeding term from 1917 to 1926. In 1926 he was elected to Parliament on the Independent Labour party ticket.

In May, 1919, Winnipeg experienced a powerful demonstration of labour strength when the labour unions launched a city-wide general strike. The unions, smarting under industry's reluctance to negotiate with them, were determined to protest and to correct the ills of long hours, low wages, and poor housing. During the six-week-long strike public services were disrupted and a citizens' committee of one thousand was organized to handle these services. Those who identified with the Citizens' Committee were branded anti-unionist by strikers and their sympathizers. Two among these were Max Steinkopf, school trustee, and H. E. Wilder, unsuccessful aldermanic candidate in that year's election. When Steinkopf stood for re-election to the School Board his seat was contested by Mrs. Max Alcin, a socialist. The choice was a clear one for large numbers in the Jewish community who were themselves workingmen. Steinkopf was a successful lawyer and affluent businessman; Mrs. Alcin, the wife of a watchmaker, was part of the labour movement. Steinkopf was defeated and Mrs. Alcin became the first Jewish woman to hold public office in Canada. She served for six years as a school trustee. Eight years later, when Max Steinkopf ran for the legislature his unpopular stand in the 1919 strike was still remembered. Again he was defeated, this time by a comparative newcomer to the political scene, Captain William Tobias.

V

An interesting development in city politics was the election of John Blumberg to the City Council. Blumberg, an English-born Jew, was in 1919 the labour candidate in Ward 6, an area predominantly populated by English and Scottish working people. He was returned to office regularly and served on every Council committee during his thirty-three year career as alderman. At the centre of labour activities he was a fearless spokesman for labour's rights in civic politics. In

1950 Blumberg ran for the mayoralty seat but was defeated. He retired from City Council in 1956 to assume the post of chairman of the Greater Winnipeg Transit Committee.

Marcus Hyman, prominent Winnipeg barrister, served as School Board trustee from 1920 to 1925. He was elected to the legislature in 1932 where he made a singular contribution in the field of anti-defamatory legislation by drafting and sponsoring an amendment to the Libel Act. The amendment made the original act effective by allowing any individual or group maligned or defamed because of race or religion to prosecute anyone responsible for such defamation. Henceforth, to publish or circulate hate literature in Manitoba became a criminal offence.

Morris A. Gray, prominent in Labour Zionist work in Western Canada, began his political career in 1926, when he was elected to the School Board of Winnipeg. After four years as a trustee, Gray was elected an alderman and served in that capacity for twelve years. In 1942 he was elected to the Manitoba legislature which seat he has held continuously for the past nineteen years. Gray has advocated liberal old-age pensions, improvements in social welfare, and mothers' allowances.

A former Hebrew School principal, later an executive with the Canadian Jewish Congress, Myer Averbach served as a School Board trustee from 1933 to 1949. He fought attempts to utilize the public schools for religious instruction and urged that greater efforts be made to achieve intercultural understanding through the school curriculum.

Ernest A. Brotman, an alderman from 1942 to 1950, denounced discriminatory tendencies against minorities of the city and in 1947 prevented the removal of the Hyman amendment from the statutory books of the Province. He served as a member of the Police Commission and was chairman of the Health and Utility Committees.

Others who were elected to public office were Mrs. S. Hart Green, school trustee (1931-2), W. C. Ross, school trustee (1936-9), Joseph Zuken, school trustee (1941-), Dr. Mindel Sheps, school trustee (1943-4), David Orlikow, school trustee (1945-51) and alderman (1951-), Saul Cherniak, school trustee (1950-1), and Mark Danzker, alderman.

Elsewhere in Manitoba, Jews elected to public office were: J. B. Dembinski, mayor (The Pas), Harry Trager, councillor (The Pas), Jack Freedman, mayor (Flin Flon), Frank Dembinsky, mayor, (Flin Flon), Samuel Heft, mayor (Winnipeg Beach), I. Callen, councillor (Portage la Prairie), and M. Cristall, alderman (Brandon).

In West Kildonan, C. N. Kushnir was elected mayor for several terms, Saul Miller and Eli Weinberg, councillors, Julia Green Margolis, Jack Silverberg and Jack Moss, school trustees.

Appointed to public office in recent years have been Irwin I. Cutler, Louis Matlin, and Isaac Rice, magistrates; S. Hart Green, Q.C., Crown Counsel for the Dominion in Prosecutions Under the Excise Act; A. M. Shinbane, Q.C., Crown Counsel for the Prosecution of Narcotics Cases for the Dominion. In 1956 Shinbane was appointed to the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. David Golden was appointed Deputy Minister of Defence Production in May, 1951, and in April, 1952, Mr. Justice Samuel Freedman was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench in Manitoba.

During their eighty years of settlement in Manitoba, Jews have been an integral part of the fabric of political life. Not only in Winnipeg proper but in the towns and villages of the province Jews have been mayors, reeves, school trustees and aldermen. Because they believed in the validity and workability of democratic government, many of them participated actively to make their government in Manitoba more secure and more effective.

PATTERNS AND TRENDS

MANITOBA'S CAPITAL city, Winnipeg, which contains the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population in the province has repeatedly been referred to by visiting speakers and writers as the "Jerusalem of North America." Not an empty piece of flattery, this designation points to a dynamic Jewish cultural and community life which has been richly variegated and consistently intense. The Jewish community has been singularly self-sufficient, strong in its Jewish affiliations, and secure in its relationship to the non-Jewish Canadian world in which it lives. Far from fearing that they might be accused of double loyalties, that their Canadianism might be suspect, Manitoba's Jews believed and acted upon the belief that living as Jews they did not detract from the sum total of the Canadian pattern but rather contributed to it more authentically and more creatively. A far cry from the "marginal men" of some communities, the Jews of Manitoba have been positive and loyal Canadians at the same time that they have been positive and loyal Jews.

Two major factors have been responsible for this unusual pattern of development, almost unique in all of North America. The first of these is that it was not the Jews of German origin but rather eastern European Jews whose numbers, cultural vitality, and influence made them the dominant Jewish immigrant group in Manitoba. The three hundred Russian-Jewish immigrants who came in 1882 found no more than one hundred Jews in Winnipeg, recently arrived from several countries of western Europe. These had hardly had the opportunity to settle, much less to organize community institutions or set the life pattern of the community.

It remained for the eastern European immigrants who came in large numbers to determine the direction which the Jewish community was to take. Those years saw the arrival of traditional Jews, Radical Jews, Hebraists, Yiddishists, and Zionists. Among them were intelligent, thoughtful people, searching, critical, and articulate and they supplied a vigorous new element in Jewish cultural and community life in the city. Many of them were men and women who were strongly rooted in Jewish life and it was natural that they should transplant

the traditions and values of their early years into the Canadian environment.

The second factor is the strong multi-ethnic character of the province. Manitoba attracted large numbers of French-Canadian, Icelandic, Mennonite, and Ukrainian immigrants and its government permitted them to retain their religious and cultural tradition and their group mores and even to transmit these to the younger generations through schools of their own. Flanked by such clear examples of ethnic loyalties the Jews of Manitoba were encouraged to preserve their own heritage. This they did, retaining as much of it as they believed to be compatible with life in a modern day.

In addition to the influences of the immigration from eastern Europe and of the multi-ethnic settlement of Manitoba, two ancillary factors share the responsibility for the character of the Manitoba Jewish community. One is its geographic isolation and the other is the economic position in the lower middle class which the majority of Jews held for five decades. Although Manitoba's Jews have kept themselves closely informed of developments throughout the world and have demonstrated strong interest in these developments, frequently working for and contributing to major Jewish and general causes, still their geographic situation has enabled them to grow independently as a community. The internal controversies of American Jewry have in most instances left them untouched with the result that Manitoba Jewry's growth has been individual and hearty. Isolated by distance and by the long, severe winters the Jews of Winnipeg were left to their own resources. A vigorous and self-sufficient Jewry worked with these conditions and wrought great creativity in communal, cultural, and religious life, in education, in music, in drama, and in Jewish journalism.

The lower middle class status of Manitoba's Jews for more than fifty years did not allow clear-cut class and caste barriers based upon considerations of wealth to develop. The leadership of the community grew out of the mass and was not left to a small affluent group. Jewish institutions and philanthropies were initiated and supported by the mass and were rarely dependent for funds and leadership upon the rich few. As a result there was popular participation in all phases of community life and a healthy interaction of the ideas and influences brought by men and women of differing ideologies from contrasting conditions of life.

Today a large majority of the adult Jewish community of Manitoba is Canadian-born. By and large these men and women identify

positively with Jewish life, they accept the institutions built by their parents and grandparents, and they continue to support them. But the zeal of the eastern European immigrants, their fiery partisanship to particular causes and philosophies, their originality and independence, has been largely supplanted by a concern with efficiency and co-ordinated effort. In place of the critical attitude and the rugged individuality of several decades ago, there is today a desire for peaceful conformity. Community effort is still at a maximum; it continues to be positive and significant but it is unified and orderly. The fire, the vigour, and the colour of earlier days are almost history.

APPENDIXES

Winnipeg Jewish Organizations, August 1956

BENEFIT AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS

Achdus Free Loan Society
Bessarabier Free Loan Society
Hebrew Fraternal Lodge
Hebrew Sick Benefit Association
Independent Order of B'nai Abraham

Independent Free Loan Society
Kiever Free Loan Society
Liberty Free Loan Society
Winnipeg Aid Society
Zion Loan Society

LANDSMANSCHAFTEN

Bobrover Society
Meziricher Society
Nikoliever Society
Shearith Hapleita
Podolier Organization

Polish Farband
Poproisker Society
Rovner Landsmanschaft
Voliner Society

ZIONIST MEN'S GROUPS

Brandeis Club
Chaim Weizman Club
Mizrachi Men's Organization

Poalei Zion Organization
Sharon Zionist Club
National Workers Alliance

ZIONIST WOMEN'S GROUPS

Daughters of Zion
Hadassah Organization

Pioneer Women's Organization
Mizrachi Women's Organization

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

B'nai B'rith lodges
B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation
B'nai B'rith Youth Organization
B'nai B'rith Women's Organization
Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University
Eastern Star
General Monash Branch
Habonim
Hashomer Hatzair
Jewish Library
Jewish Men's Musical Club
Jewish Women's Musical Club

Jewish Community Choir
Jewish Community Orchestra
Knesseth Israel Sisterhood
Mount Carmel Clinic
National Council of Jewish Women
Peretz School Council
Reading Circle Council
Talmud Torah Parent-Teachers Association
Workingmen's Circle Branch 169
Young Men's Hebrew Association
Young Women's Sisterhood

Personal Interviews

The author is deeply appreciative of the information which was so generously offered to him by the following people:

Mr. and Mrs. Max Alcin who settled in Winnipeg in 1904 and were leaders in Yiddish Radical circles.

Abraham Brownstone, an early general store proprietor, who settled in Plum Coulee in 1892.

Joseph A. Cherniak who came to Winnipeg from Russia and in 1918 completed his law studies at the University of Manitoba; a leader in Yiddishist circles he was a founder of the I. L. Peretz School.

Reuben Cohen who settled in Winnipeg in 1905 and became a leader in several important organizations, particularly the Hebrew Sick Benefit Association of which he was a founder.

Samuel J. Drache, Q.C., a native Winnipegger who steered the affairs of the Zionist Organization during the crucial years of the 1940's and thereafter.

Harry Fainstein who came to Winnipeg in 1907 and achieved success in the cattle and meat-packing fields. He was closely associated with the Jewish Orphanage of Western Canada and the Jewish Old Folks Home.

Melvin Fenson, one-time editor of the *Jewish Post* and later of the *Israelite Press*, whose astute observations were always most helpful.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Finkelman whose excellent memories brought forth valuable reminiscences. Mrs. Finkelman is the daughter of the late Harry Isaacs who was closely linked with Shaarey Zedek and Shaarey Shomayim Congregations. He was a civil servant for many years in the Manitoba Land Titles Office.

M. J. Finkelstein, Q.C., who came to Winnipeg as a child in 1892. He was the second Jew to be called to the Manitoba Bar, the first being Max Steinkopf. He was the leader of a host of community projects in both the Jewish and general community of Winnipeg.

Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Frankfurter, both of whom came from the earliest Jewish families in Manitoba. Mrs. Frankfurter was a daughter of Adolphe Coblenz; Mr. Frankfurter was a son of George Frankfurter.

S. Hart Green, Q.C., who was a native of St. John, New Brunswick and came to Winnipeg in 1907 and was associated with the law firm of Campbell, Pitblado and Company. Mr. Green was closely identified with many Jewish communal endeavours. His wife was the granddaughter of S. Linetsky, an 1882 Russian arrival.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Heppner who both offered valuable information. Mr. Heppner gave assistance concerning the agricultural projects with which he was once closely identified as an agent for the Jewish Colonization Association.

A. Montague Israels, Q.C., a native Winnipegger whose grandparents were early Roumanian immigrants. He is a prominent barrister and is active in community undertakings. He was an early member of the Menorah Society at the University of Manitoba.

The late Philip Lechtzier who came to Winnipeg with his parents

from Russia in 1882 and together with them farmed at Moosomin. Later he settled in Winnipeg and was a founder of Beth Jacob Synagogue.

Prof. Guthrie Perry who reminisced about his Jewish students, the early Jewish community and his associations with it.

The late Isaac Portigal who settled in Winnipeg in the 1890's where he became active in Orthodox circles and a staunch supporter of old Rosh Pina Synagogue.

Reginald Ripstein, a member of a pre-1882 family, who gave valuable information about his family in particular.

S. M. Selchen, the highly regarded editor of the Israelite Press, who for at least four decades had been closely identified with cultural endeavours, both as a thoughtful journalist and active leader.

Ben Sheps who is a prominent figure in Jewish life on the local and national scene.

A. Mark Shinbane, Q.C., who is a respected barrister and member of a pioneer family.

Pinye Silver who was helpful in offering information about Jews in the Mennonite districts.

Frank Simkin who was for many years the publisher of the Israelite Press and a vigorous communal leader.

Professor Sol Sinclair, chairman of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Manitoba, who was particularly helpful in the subject of Jews in agriculture.

The late W. J. Sisler who was for many years Principal of Strathcona School in the heart of the immigrant district.

Harry Steinberg, a delightful raconteur about the Jewish past and a pioneer in the garment manufacturing field.

Morris Triller, for many years active in various Jewish endeavours and in particular in Yiddish theatre.

The late Mordecai Weidman, an 1882 settler, who filled in many worthwhile details about the early era.

Neiman Weidman, a prominent businessman and member of an 1882 family, who grew up and was part of Jewish organizational development and a founder of the Winnipeg Jewish Welfare Fund.

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